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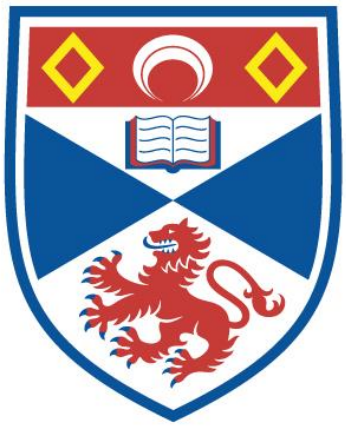
CHALLENGING MALENESS – THE NEW WOMAN'S ATTEMPTS TO RECONSTRUCT THE BINARY CODE

Elena Rebekka Götting

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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Challenging Maleness – The New Woman's Attempts to Reconstruct the Binary Code

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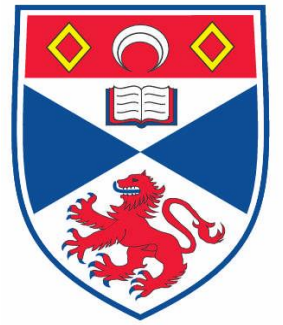

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for the degree of Ph.D.

at the

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the construction of masculinity in novels written by New Women authors between the years 1881-1899. The *fin de siècle* was a period during which gender roles were renegotiated with fervour by both male and female authors, but it was the so-called New Woman in particular who was trying to transform the Victorian notion of femininity to incorporate the demands of the burgeoning women's movement. This thesis argues that in their fiction, New Women authors often tried to achieve this transformation by creating male characters who were designed to justify and to mitigate the New Woman protagonist's departure from traditional structures of heterosexual relationships.

The methodology underlying this thesis is the notion that men and women were perceived as binary opposites during the Victorian period. I refer to this as the binary code of the sexes. This code assumes that men and women naturally possess diametrically opposed character attributes, and also that "masculine" attributes are perforce better than "feminine" ones. In the body of this work, I argue that New Women authors attempted to contest both of these assumptions by creating, on the one hand, traditional male characters whose masculinity is corrupted in crucial and recurring ways, and on the other, impaired male characters who cannot assume the traditional role of man. The comparison of the New Woman protagonist with the corrupt traditional man elevates her feminine attributes, while the impaired man's dependency legitimises her acquisition of what were otherwise considered "masculine" attributes and privileges, thereby contesting the notion that men and women possess sex-specific attributes at all.

The second part of my thesis examines contrasting examples, in which this way of characterising masculinity – as traditional or impaired – is questioned and manipulated. It examines the limitations of the New Women authors' specific approach to reconstructing the binary code.

DECLARATIONS

1. Candidate's declarations:

I, Elena Rebekka Götting, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2009 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in September 2010; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2009 and 2013.

I, Elena Rebekka Götting, received assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of language, grammar and syntax, which was provided by Dr. Laura Hodsdon.

Date…..……signature of candidate ….……

2. Supervisor's declaration:

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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For my Grandfathers

Fritz Götting and Arthur Theuerkauf

who were New Men before their Time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe special thanks to my supervisor Phillip Mallett for trusting me to develop my own ideas even when they seemed far from his own, and for pulling me back when they went off the map completely. I have profited from his vast knowledge of New Woman fiction, and from his discreet way of steering me into profitable directions, in more ways than I probably realise.

I am very thankful for the support of my university during the years I had to be absent from St Andrews, and to Sandra McDevitt for answering all my questions, even those I had not asked yet. Chera Ann Cole has been a fantastic roommate, and has acted as my stand-in during my absence; thank you for that.

This thesis would not exist without the men of my family – my father, my three brothers, my uncles and cousins, and my grandfathers – who have shared with me their thoughts and fears on becoming and on being men. Neither would it exist without my mother's unceasing efforts to determine at all times just "how the boys are doing", which has inspired me to ask the same.

I am deeply grateful to my parents Martin and Elke Götting, who paved the way for my university education by imparting their love for learning to me. Their emotional and financial support during my studies has been invaluable. Thank you for being who you are, and for loving the woman I have become.

I also owe special thanks to my youngest brother Leon Balthasar Götting, who has read large parts of this thesis and helped me to shape my thoughts, and to my honorary little sister Laura Jäger, whose wonderful individuality has sparked my interest in gender studies, and who has encouraged and soothed me throughout all these years.

Finally, a special thank you goes to Ingiberg Thor Thorsteinsson, who has been with me from the beginning of this project, and who has never lost faith either in my "big essay", or in me.

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ABBREVIATIONS

of frequently used primary texts

Brooke, Emma Frances

ASW	*A Superfluous Woman* (1894)

Broughton, Rhoda

DF	*Dear Faustina* (1897)

Caird, Mona

WoA	*The Wing of Azrael* (1889)
DoD	*The Daughters of Danaus* (1894)

Cholmondeley, Mary

DT	*Diana Tempest* (1893)
RP	*Red Pottage* (1899)

Dixie, Lady Florence

GL	*Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900* (1890)

Dixon, Ella Hepworth

SMW	*The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894)

Egerton, George (Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright)

RoT	“A Regeneration of Two” (1894)
WoG	*The Wheel of God* (1898)

ABBREVIATIONS

of frequently used primary texts

Fothergill, Jessie

KK *Kith and Kin* (1881)

Grand, Sarah (Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke)

HT *The Heavenly Twins* (1893)

BB *The Beth Book* (1897)

Holdsworth, Annie E.

YLHE *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten* (1895)

Iota (Kathleen Mannington Caffyn)

AYA *A Yellow Aster* (1894)

PM *Poor Max* (1898)

Lee, Vernon (Violet Paget)

MB *Miss Brown* (1884)

Meade, L.T. (Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith)

GoP *A Girl of the People* (1890)

Schreiner, Olive

SAF *The Story of an African Farm* (1883)

MtM *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...* (1926)

INTRODUCTION

The New Woman and Her Time

The *fin de siècle* possesses what one may call, without fear of exaggeration, an aura. The very term itself seems to evoke the odour of absinthe, the splendour of the dandy's elaborate wardrobe, and the excitement of a wide-spread apocalyptic mood. Over the course of the last century, popular representations of the *fin de siècle* have made a habit of emphasising these cultic paraphernalia, and as a result, the period has fascinated many of those cultural latecomers who were born after the turn of the century transformed this *fin* into merely another beginning. With its emphasis on style, its predilection for scandals, and its great scientific advances side by side with its abysses – from the literary monstrosities of Mr Hyde and Count Dracula to the real, but hardly less shadowy, Ripper – there is very little doubt that the period will continue to excite and inspire even in the twenty-first century.

To the critic of literature, perhaps the 1890s register as, above all, a time of unrest. Even a cursory glance at the table of contents of Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst's *Fin de Siècle Reader* reveals the multitude and weight of discourses that the intellectual circles of this period engaged in. "The Metropolis and Outcast London", "The New Imperialism", "Socialism" and "Anarchism", "Psychology and Psychical Research", "Anthropology and Racial Science", "Sexology" and "Degeneration",[1] these topics inspired contemporary debate and were crucial to the intellectual climate that characterised the end of the nineteenth century.

If pressed for a succinct definition, perhaps the *fin de siècle* is best described as an age of contradictions. It is commonly regarded as the period in which modern science was born, but it was also the period in which phrenology and mesmerism were

[1] Cf. Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, eds., *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, C. 1880-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. vii-xi.

able to masquerade, however briefly, as science, while Ignaz Semmelweis was driven to madness by the contempt of his colleagues for the idea that there was a connection between infant mortality rates and the attending physician's lack of hygiene. It is this vast number of contradictions that is largely responsible for the period's continuing fascination.

The phenomenon of New Woman literature plays its part in *fin-de-siècle* contradictoriness. Since its recovery from "the dustbin of literature",[2] there have been a number of important studies on the subject of New Woman literature, beginning in 1973 with A. R. Cunningham's essay "The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890s",[3] and followed in 1982 by Elaine Showalter's overview of women writers from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing, in which chapter VII, "The Feminist Novelists", considered New Women authors.[4] In 1977, Lloyd Fernando published a book-length study on New Woman writing,[5] but, apart from George Eliot,[6] he considered only male authors: George Meredith, George Moore, George Gissing and Thomas Hardy.

In the 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, book-length studies by Ann Ardis,[7] Sally Ledger[8] and Ann Heilmann[9] drew attention to the female authors of the *fin de siècle*, and widened and consolidated the academic and the popular

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[2] This is Lyn Pykett's phrase: Lyn Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine: the Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 204.
[3] A. R. Cunningham, "The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890's", *Victorian Studies* 17.2 (1973), pp. 177-86.
[4] Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (1977) (London: Virago, 1982).
[5] Lloyd Fernando, *"New Women" in the Late Victorian Novel* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977).
[6] Though perhaps a peculiar choice, Fernando argues that Eliot was in many ways not just an early contemporary, but a predecessor of the New Woman. In her writing, he argues, Eliot gives women "an unprecedented role in human life, complementary not subservient to that of man". Fernando, *New Women*, p. 31. He also claims that "with [*The Mill on the Floss*] the opening salvoes in a coming revolution of morality had been fired". Cf. Fernando, *New Women*, p. 38.
[7] Ann Louise Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).
[8] Sally Ledger, ed., *The New Woman. Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).
[9] Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction – Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

understanding of this genre. Ann Ardis has addressed, among other matters, the subject of realism and fiction that was discussed controversially during the period, and concludes that New Women authors insisted on the importance of realism in fiction. Sally Ledger's study is particularly wide-ranging. After an initial discussion of the phenomenon of the New Woman, the study examines the New Woman's connection to socialism, imperialism, and mass culture. Ann Heilmann, on the other hand, has drawn parallels between the awakening of women's literary self-consciousness, and the second wave of feminist criticism in the twentieth century. Her study covers a vast number of works and focuses, among other topics, on the subject of marriage, the crisis of gender, and the artistic New Woman protagonist. In 2004, Ann Heilmann also published *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird*, in which she compares several of the works of these authors with a view to the transformations of traditional notions of femininity, allegory and mythology which each of them achieved.[10] The contents of these studies have gone a long way towards establishing the object of New Woman criticism, as well as providing an overview of the many different influences on the fiction of *fin-de-siècle* women writers. A minimal canon has since been established which provides a common ground for criticism, and yet this canon is still – thankfully – in the process of expanding, as the 2010-11 publication of Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton's edition of New Woman fiction shows.[11]

Since the early beginnings of New Woman criticism in the 1970s and 80s, which were in part dedicated to rescuing these works and their authors from oblivion and supplied broad overviews rather than detailed comparisons, recent criticism has become increasingly specialised, and has begun to examine in more detail the genre's connection to a number of contemporary issues that make adopting the New Women as

[10] Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
[11] Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton, ed., *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899*, 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010-2011).

"mothers" of feminism a complicated issue. Angelique Richardson has written on the connections between New Woman fiction and the eugenic movement,[12] T. J. Boisseau, among others, has addressed issues of imperialism and racism.[13] The interaction between *fin-de-siècle* women writers and the movement of modernism that Ann Ardis explored in her doctoral thesis in 1988 (published in 1990), has been researched further by Elizabeth MacLeod Walls,[14] among others, and there is an ever-increasing awareness of the class bias of this fiction. Kheagan Kane Turner's 2006 thesis on nursing in New Women novels, for instance, compares Margaret Harkness' depiction of hospital staff reactions to different social classes in *A City Girl* to those in Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman*.[15]

Another topic that has received more attention in recent years is the topic of the New Man – of masculinity as constructed in New Woman fiction. While Elaine Showalter's early survey of women's literature from Brontë to Lessing also featured a chapter on what she called "The Woman's Man", meaning male characters created by female authors, more recent studies have focused exclusively on the New Woman period to unearth the permutations of the masculine gender role in the works of women who wrote during these turbulent times. Stephanie Forward's 1998 article "The 'New Man' in *Fin-De-Siècle* Fiction" is a case in point. Forward's analysis identifies a great number of New Men, and she is on the whole very positive in her assessment of these characters. Barbara Tilley's 2002 thesis "New Men? Exploring Constructions of Masculinity in Late Nineteenth-Century New Women Novels" focuses on the figures of

[12] Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[13] T. J. Boisseau, "White Queens at the Chicago World's Fair, 1893: New Womanhood in the Service of Class, Race, and Nation", *Gender & History* 12.1 (2000), pp. 33-81.
[14] Elizabeth MacLeod Walls, "'A Little Afraid of the Women of Today': The Victorian New Woman and the Rhetoric of British Modernism", *Rhetoric Review* 21.3 (2002), pp. 229-46.
[15] Keaghan Kane Turner, "In Perfect Sympathy: Representations of Nursing in New Woman Fiction", Ph.D., University of South Carolina, 2006.

"the lover, the husband and the doctor"[16] in New Woman fiction. Her selection of these character types is motivated by the fact that all three are "intimately involved with women's bodies, desires, and their sexuality".[17] She examines a wide range of novels and finds a number of interesting parallels between these types of men in very different New Women novels, but is more careful about referring to these characters as "New Men" than Stephanie Forward. Gabriele Pamperl's 2008 thesis "The Subversion of Gender: Representations of New Women in Literature of the Fin de Siècle" deals with the New Woman's subversion of the feminine gender role, rather than the masculine, but with chapters on "Denaturalizing the Heterosexual Matrix" and "Androgyny and the Destabilization of the Sex Dichotomy"[18] her account of the New Woman's gender subversion naturally touches on the construction of masculinity as well.

What many of these studies have in common is the idea that there are certain recurrent types of men in New Woman fiction. Considering the numerous and often fundamental differences in the approach of different New Women writers, this result is surprising, yet it mirrors the feelings of the New Woman's contemporaries, whose attacks on this body of fiction frequently targeted specifically its representation of masculinity. For instance, when Margaret Oliphant reviewed Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* in her 1896 article "The Anti-Marriage League", she was especially indignant about his characterisation of the male protagonist, whom she calls "a very poor creature" that is "always the puppet, always acted upon by the others". This, to Oliphant, is characteristic of New Woman fiction:

> [i]t is the women who are the active agents in all this unsavoury imbroglio: the story is carried on, and life is represented as carried on, entirely by their means. The men are passive, suffering, rather good than otherwise, victims of these and of fate. Not only do they never dominate,

[16] Barbara Tilley, "New Men? Exploring Constructions of Masculinity in Late Nineteenth-Century New Woman Novels", Ph.D., University of Florida, 2002, p. 7.
[17] Tilley, "New Men?", p. v.
[18] Gabriele Pamperl, "The Subversion of Gender: Representations of New Women in Literature of the Fin de Siècle", University of Vienna, 2008, p. 29, p. 108.

> but they are quite incapable of holding their own . . . This is one of the most curious developments of recent fiction.[19]

Only a year later, in the same magazine, Hugh Stutfield also complained about the typical New Woman's man, yet to him, this type was diametrically opposed to the one Oliphant had identified: "man is represented by so many lady novelists as a blackguard or an idiot, or both, sometimes diseased, always a libertine and a bully",[20] he wrote in "The Psychology of Feminism".

In these two reviews, both Margaret Oliphant and Hugh Stutfield claim that they have identified the "typical man" in New Woman fiction, yet they describe him very differently, and this difference intrigued me. Is the New Woman's man a bully, or a puppet? A blackguard or a victim? He cannot well be both, and in all likelihood Oliphant and Stutfield reacted to different, but recurrent types of male characters created by New Women writers. This conclusion raises several questions: did New Women authors really create recurrent and diametrically opposed "types" rather than individual male characters? And if so, what was the purpose of representing men either as diseased tyrants, or as ineffectual puppets? This thesis attempts to answer both questions by arguing that the reason for the New Woman's particular representation of masculinity was the fact that she attempted to justify the protagonist's departure from traditional patterns of femininity.

The traditional Victorian notion of femininity postulated that women were the opposite of men in all their defining character attributes. In latter-day criticism, this ideology is sometimes referred to as domestic ideology, and sometimes as the ideology of separate spheres, but underlying both these terms is the notion that during this particular timeframe, men and women were perceived as binary opposites, meaning that

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[19] Margaret Oliphant, "The Anti-Marriage League", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 159 (1896), pp. 135-49: p. 140.
[20] Hugh E. M. Stutfield, "The Psychology of Feminism", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 161 (1897), pp. 104-17: p. 116.

they formed (or were ideally supposed to form) a binary code in which the concept of man was defined by its opposition to the concept of woman. In the body of this thesis, I will refer to this notion as the binary code of the sexes.

The idea that men and women were perceived to stand in binary opposition to one another is one that many critics have worked with when examining the gender relations of the Victorian and the *fin-de-siècle* period. For instance, in *New Women, New Novels,* Ann Ardis writes: "[New Women] challenge . . . the pattern of thinking in hierarchically organised binary oppositions that pits men against women".[21] She also takes issue with Martha Vicinus' claim that women in late Victorian England were "widening" their sphere because, as she argues convincingly, this phrase "suggests a continuum, a smooth and gradual process of cultural change" that is contradicted by the basic assumptions on which separate spheres ideology rests. In reality, Ardis argues, "disputes about gender roles entailed the reconceptualization of the relation between domestic (female) and public (male) spaces". In this analysis, binary thinking is criticised implicitly, as an underlying condition that forbade an easy widening of women's (or men's) allotted sphere.

However, Ardis does not elaborate on these thoughts on the following pages. She opens a discussion of the different types of advanced women who tried to reconceptualise woman's role, but curiously refrains from exploring how these types would or did affect man's role in turn. It is not that she retracts her previous statement that men's and women's roles are inextricably connected, however, she chooses not to explore this connection any further, and instead focuses on women's role only. Her concentration on this side of the matter is so marked that she discusses Lady Florence Dixie's *Gloriana* entirely without mentioning the protagonist's friend/lover Lord Evelyn, whose express femininity is one of the most obvious examples of the

[21] Ardis, *New Women, New Novels,* p. 27.

interdependence of the spheres under the binary code that Ardis herself had noted in her critique of Martha Vicinus.[22] As a result, Ardis only scratches the surface of gender relations. Jane Campbell has noted this in her review of *New Women, New Novels*, where she summarises that Ardis does not "explore – as she had originally planned to do – the work of modernism in further destabilizing notions of gender."[23]

Ardis' study is in its essence a work on the relation between the New Woman novel and realism in fiction, and not a work on gender relations.[24] Insofar, it is perhaps not surprising that she does not discuss the gender binary at any length, but it is significant that she would introduce the subject in her introduction, and yet feel no need to pursue it any further. This is to some extent a typical approach – as a phenomenon, binary opposition often remains relatively unexamined, even as it is used to explain highly problematic issues.

Among the critics who have elaborated a little further on their understanding of binary pairs and binary opposition is Gail Cunningham. In her 2001 essay "'He-Notes': Reconstructing Masculinity", she argues that the typical "despair-and-death fixation" of New Woman fiction can be traced back to the fact that

> [t]he New Woman's attempts to claim parity were . . . attempts to annex space for women within a system of binaries which continued unquestioningly to privilege the male.[25]

She concludes that the representation of masculinity in certain New Woman texts "invert[s] the oppositional terms and, in different ways, attempt[s] to valorize the female".[26] Although this analysis takes the binary code of the sexes as its starting point,

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[22] C.f. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, pp. 119-22.
[23] Jane Campbell, "Review of Ann Ardis' New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism", *The International Fiction Review* 19.2 (1992), pp. 133-34: p. 134.
[24] She is primarily interested in the relation of New Woman literature with Modernism on the one hand, and with Victorian Realism on the other.
[25] Gail Cunningham, "'He-Notes': Reconstructing Masculinity", in Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (eds.), *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 95. The title is a play on the 1894 Punch parody entitled "She-notes", which in turn parodies the title and style of George Egerton's 1893 short story collection *Keynotes*.
[26] Cunningham, "He-Notes", p. 96.

it still does not inquire sufficiently into its effects, and it is exactly this gap which my thesis is supposed to fill. What is the "system of binaries" that Cunningham refers to, and within this system, what is the space New Women tried to annex? What influence did the attempted "valorisation" of "the female" have on the contemporary perception of the concepts of woman and of man? And how do Margaret Oliphant's and Hugh Stutfield's diametrically opposed "types" relate to this peculiar approach of New Woman fiction?

Contrary to Gail Cunningham, who argues that New Woman texts which attempt to redefine the binary relation of men and women "are found in the latter part of the 1890s, after the period of the New Woman fiction's prime flourish",[27] I believe that novels which attempt to renegotiate the relative positions of men and women with a specific view to their binary connection are not exclusively a phenomenon of the later years of the 1890s. In my view, this renegotiation had been present in New Woman fiction from the outset, and indeed continued a trend that had characterised women's writing since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. It is therefore essential to examine this ideology of binary opposition, or binary code of the sexes, not only in its social manifestations, as has hitherto happened, but at the level of its conception.

The body of this work consists of a number of close readings of New Women novels. It will be my argument that the two different types of men that reoccur in New Woman fiction so frequently – the "bully" and the "puppet", in Stutfield's and Oliphant's terms – were created independently in a wide range of New Women novels to help the author renegotiate the binary code of the sexes. In other words, the objective of my study is to examine how the New Woman's representation of masculinity was affected by the contemporary prevalence of binary thinking, and by the resulting notion that men and women formed a binary pair. This approach attempts to unearth structures

[27] Cunningham, "He-Notes", p. 96.

that underlie New Woman writing, and intriguingly, that also seem to have shaped modern criticism of New Woman writing to a certain degree.

On the following pages, I will introduce some of the philosophical speculations which have inspired my particular reading of New Woman fiction. Taking Gail Cunningham's essay as a starting point, I will examine some philosophers, feminist and otherwise, who have written on binary structures and binary thinking, and from these and from my own observations, I hope to develop a methodology that will allow me to uncover and to analyse New Woman fiction from the point of view of its interaction with, and deconstruction of, the binary code of the sexes.

Methodology: Binary Codes

A binary code, in the common usage of the phrase, is the encoding of a message with the help of only two variables, traditionally zero (0) and one (1). By extension, "binary code" can also refer to any system in which binary opposites are employed to structure the world.[28] The fact that men and women were connected in a binary construction during the Victorian Age is one that critics have acknowledged for many years, at times explicitly, and at other times without drawing the reader's attention specifically to this underlying assumption. Nor am I, by any means, the first to enquire into the nature of binary thinking.[29] Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 study *The Second Sex*, for instance, is an example of an early insight into the harmfulness of binary thinking for the concept of woman. In her introduction, de Beauvoir refers to the fundamentality of the concept of otherness in the formation of binary thinking: "[i]n the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality – that of the Self and the Other".[30]

The tendency to code the world in binaries is without doubt ancient. Perhaps one of the most striking examples is the origin of the term "barbarous", which in the original Greek meant "anyone who is not Greek". Greek and not-Greek is a very encompassing binary that seems to order the entirety of the world into two neatly separated categories. But in order to maintain these categories, difference between them had to be established and enforced continuously, lest the whole system should collapse into undifferentiated chaos.

In the twentieth century, the observation that binary pairs have a tendency to systematise chaos became the primary focus of the critical method now commonly

[28] Cf. Benjamin Isaac, "Barbarians", *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, Michael Gagarin (ed.), 2010.
[29] Nancy Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy", *Feminist Studies* 7.1 (1981), pp. 38-56: p. 46.
[30] Simone de Beauvoir, "'Introduction' to the Second Sex", in Linda Nicholson (ed.), The Second Wave – A Reader in Feminist Theory (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 13. De Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* was originally published in 1949.

referred to as structuralism. Structuralism originated in Ferdinand de Saussure's approach to linguistics, and it made the existence of binary pairs the lynchpin of its worldview. Without opposition, or so structuralist linguistics posited, there could be no meaning in language, since words can never connect directly to their referents and instead rely only on their difference from other signs of the same system for their meaning.[31] Structuralism has been criticised for, at times, granting a quasi-religious element to binary pairs and the structures resulting from them. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in particular believed that the tendency to pair concepts in binaries reflected the human brain structure, and proceeded to analyse human culture from this point of view.[32]

This uncomplicated approach to binary structures came under discussion in the 1960s and 70s in the works of Jacques Derrida.[33] Derrida explicitly problematised the formation of binary structures. He drew attention to the fact that the ordering of the world into binary partner concepts, which has been crucial to the majority of Western culture and philosophy, by force implied a valuation of the terms thus connected. The notion of valued binary terms is the basis for Derrida's advocacy of *deconstruction*, the method he developed for contesting binary coding and its implicit valuation. In Derrida's view, since every privileged binary term always implies its devalued opposite as an integral part of its own definition, neither term is in fact privileged over the other, and texts must be examined with a view to bringing the underprivileged, devalued term

[31] In the terms of a famous example, the animal standing in the field is the referent, while "horse" is one possible sign for this referent. The arbitrariness of the connection between sign and referent (signifier and signified in Saussure's terminology) is made obvious by the fact that different language systems have different words for the same referents (cheval, Pferd), and "horse" carries meaning only insofar as it is different from hose, house, Morse, and so forth.

[32] The notion of binary pairs became the focal point of Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological studies, in which he attempted to demonstrate that binary thinking underlies – and can therefore help to explain – much of mankind's philosophy and culture. For an example, cf. for instance his exploration of the structural similarities between the myths of different South American tribes: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, transl. John and Doreen Weightman, Introduction to a Science of Mythology vol. 1, 4 vols. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970).

[33] Derrida elaborates on binary pairs in *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology*, both published in 1967.

back to the centre of the text. A successful deconstruction reveals where the text implicitly rests on binary opposites and how the inferior term establishes itself even as the privileged term tries to suppress it.[34]

One of Derrida's examples of such a hierarchized binary was the pair man-woman. He did not necessarily connect this observation with a political or social appeal, but feminist philosophers and critics quickly realised that binary codes and compulsory valuation could explain many of the facets of women's age-long oppression. Thus began a long and fruitful engagement of feminist philosophy with the topic of binary coding, and the practice of deconstruction, an engagement which was not always straightforwardly affirmative, but one which has enriched feminist thought. I will briefly trace this engagement on the following pages to locate my own enquiry of binary codes within the rich and multi-facetted feminist tradition.

The first feminist thinkers who elaborated on the ideas of Derrida were, perhaps inevitably, French. In her 1975 essays "Le rire de la Méduse" and "Sorties",[35] Hélène Cixous investigated the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and of Jacques Lacan, among others, under the aspect of binary oppositions and valuation, and came to the conclusion that the opposition of male and female represented the culmination point of a long series of binary pairs that had structured Western civilisation. She too enforced the idea that binaries are of necessity valued, and distanced herself from what she perceived as the aim of radical feminism, namely, to reverse hierarchisation rather than to do away with it.

[34] Derrida has shown this to be the case in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, in which Saussure codes speech and writing in just such a valued binary, although he is otherwise very careful of the mechanics of binary pairs. Cf. "Linguistics and Grammatology", the second chapter of Derrida's influential *Of Grammatology*. In: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967), transl. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[35]

Luce Irigaray, in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (1977),[36] concerned herself with ways to think "woman" outside of the term's traditional dependence on its binary opposite, man. Écriture féminine, a concept which was introduced by Cixous and expanded by Irigaray, among others, is thus in its essence an attempt to think woman outside of binary dependencies – as an "other" which does not presuppose a one. However, the concept of écriture feminine, because it rests on the assumption that it is an inherently feminine way of expression, has itself been criticised as perpetuating "natural" sex differences, even as it attempted to change the traditional valuation of the concepts of man and woman.

In the Anglo-American tradition, Derrida's theories have undergone more questioning and redressing than in the French tradition. For one, the characteristically continental leaning towards literary theory and psychoanalytic theory of Derrida's work complicated its assimilation into the work of feminist philosophers of the Anglo-American tradition, as did the simple fact that *De la Grammatologie* was not translated until 1976. For another, the appeal for the deconstruction of binary opposites intersected at odd angles with another, older discussion that had characterised the feminist tradition until the arrival of poststructuralism: the sameness /difference debate. The arrival of Derrida's theories in the Anglo-American tradition widened this debate, or rather, changed its focus, but it was not an easy adjustment.

Feminism and poststructuralism, as has frequently been remarked,[37] are uneasy allies. Linda Alcoff, for instance, pointed out in 1988 that Derrida's advocacy of decentralisation, and the dissolution of all binaries, may leave feminism without a "subject":

> For Derrida, women have always been defined as a subjugated difference within a binary opposition: man/woman, culture/nature, positive/negative, analytic/intuitive. To assert an essential gender

[36] Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977).
[37] Linda Nicholson, "Feminism and the Politics of Postmodernism", *boundary 2* 19.2 (1992), pp. 53-69.

> difference as cultural feminists do is to reinvoke this oppositional structure. The only way to break out of this structure, and in fact to subvert the structure itself, is to assert total difference, to be that which cannot be pinned down or subjugated within a dichotomous hierarchy. Paradoxically, it is to be what is not. Thus feminists cannot demarcate a definitive category of "woman" without eliminating all possibility for the defeat of logocentrism and its oppressive power.... Following Foucault and Derrida, an effective feminism could only be a wholly negative feminism, deconstructing everything and refusing to construct anything.[38]

Derrida's theories are not easily wedded with several of the more central concerns of feminism in its broadest definition. The notion of the decentralised subject and the constitutional impossibility of a fixed stand- and viewpoint which characterise this method at first glance seem to forbid the appropriation of deconstruction for a movement that has always understood itself as political, among other things. Consequently many feminists have attempted to answer, redress, and criticise Derrida's ideas, and although deconstruction has entered feminist theory, it has done so in ever-altering shapes.

I will give two examples of the engagement of feminist thought with the post-structuralist notion of binary coding and valuation here, both of which transcend the sameness/difference debate so crucial to earlier years. This is to show how fruitful the notion of binary codes and their compulsory valuation has been to feminist theory, despite the apprehension with which it has been approached.

In 1991, Moira Gatens published *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality*, in which she criticises radical feminism for its essentialist belief in natural sex differences. Gatens points out that many feminist thinkers have insisted on coding men and women as binary opposites, even if they rejected the traditional valuation of this binary by arguing for women's innate superiority. She traces the association of women with nature in Simone de Beauvoir's work, and in that of de Beauvoir's critic, Carol MacMillan. In Gatens' view, the difference between them lies

[38] Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13.3 (1988): pp. 417-18.

only in the fact that MacMillan argued for a positive valuation of nature versus its binary other, culture – this revaluation had not occurred to de Beauvoir. However, both women share a belief in women's innate connection to nature, and this association enforces binary coding. Gatens argues that it is necessary "[f]or feminist theory to break and go beyond these associations" because "[t]o affirm women's nature as 'naturally' or 'innately' nurturing, sensitive or biophilic is to ignore the ways in which those qualities have been constructed by social, political and discursive practices." Gatens aims to redress the "distorted and partial perspective" that philosophy as a discipline had sustained from the adherence of so many of its disciples, misogynist and feminist, to the idea of natural binary opposition between the sexes. To question that women, as a group, possess any attributes naturally, is also to question that woman is by nature man's binary opposite. If there is no essential feminine nature, it cannot stand in opposition to any, by deduction equally non-existent, masculine nature. In Gatens' argument, the sameness/difference debate is thus not so much answered as ousted by what is commonly called postmodern feminism.

The next step in this process of questioning the binary man-woman was to question not only the existence of an essentialist feminine nature, but even that of an essentialist *female* nature. Some postmodern philosophers like Judith Butler, Linda Nicholson, and Elizabeth Grosz have argued that the body, and specifically the notion of biological sex, is as much a social construct as is the notion of gender. These philosophers followed the traces of binary thinking into dimensions which previous generations of researchers had perceived as pre-discursive, and therefore exempt from the cultural practice of binary coding. Elizabeth Grosz' 1994 *Volatile Bodies – Toward a Corporeal Feminism* is a good example of this phase. She writes in her conclusion:

> I am reluctant to claim that sexual difference is purely a matter of the inscription and codification of somehow uncoded, absolutely raw material … . On the other hand, the opposite extreme also seems

> untenable. Bodies are not fixed, inert, purely genetically or biologically programmed entities… .[39]

Grosz explores various routes to overcome binarisation, and to arrive at a model of sexual difference "which resists, as much as possible, both dualism and monism".[40] She proposes the model of the Möbius strip to think of the interconnectedness of mind and body in an attempt to overcome Cartesian dualism. Both Gatens and Grosz perceive Cartesianism as the starting point for "a dualism which three centuries of philosophical thought have attempted to overcome or reconcile", as Grosz terms it, and both examine alternate models of the world, such as the thought system of Baruch Spinoza, a contemporary of Descartes and at the same time one of the strongest opponents of Cartesian Dualism. Leaning on Julia Kristeva and Iris Young, Grosz also explores the possibility and the usefulness of thinking bodies not as solids, but as fluids, arguing that fluids are more difficult to code in binary opposition because of their formlessness, and lack of boundaries. Although these are fascinating thought models, it is apparent that Grosz is struggling to theorise about the thought construct that must replace binary thinking, should we ever succeed in abandoning it.[41]

This struggle, this difficulty of thinking beyond binary thinking is precisely why I have decided to read New Woman literature from the point of view of its deconstruction of the binary code. I see a struggle to abolish the traditional, binary gender roles in this body of fiction which is quite unmatched by any body that has come before it, an honest, at times painful desire to restructure sexual relations that permeates a wondrously wide variety of fin-de-siècle issues, societies, causes, and bodies. From my position of historical distance, I also see the failure of this enterprise – and yet, as

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[39] Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 190.
[40] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, pp. 188-9.
[41] Indeed she openly addresses her struggle: "This book has been a preliminary exploration of some of the (patriarchal) texts which feminists may find useful in extricating the body from the mire of biologism in which it has been entrenched. But the terms by which feminists can move on from there, can supersede their patriarchal forebears, are not clear to me." Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 188.

the philosophers of our own time are evidently still struggling with the abolition of binary thinking, failure to succeed alone can be no reason not to enquire into the how and why. Perhaps, in examining why New Woman literature did not successfully abandon the binary code, we can learn how to do better.

In order to read New Women novels as deconstructions of the binary code of the sexes, as I will attempt to do here, it is imperative first to examine the formation of binary pairs as such. My view on the construction of binary pairs and their implications was developed independently of the research conducted within post-structuralist and other schools of thought,[42] yet it intersects with them at crucial points. Along with structuralist thinkers, I propose that the ordering of the world into binary pairs is indeed a tendency which has coloured Western philosophy since its beginning. And with post-structuralism, I believe that valuation inevitably besets any binary pair. In addition to these initial considerations, I suggest that binary concepts are furthermore likely to become linked with a host of additional attributes, which are attached over time to the binary terms and define and strengthen their opposition. This latter process I call the formation of attribute clusters. Each of these three steps that lead to a pronounced binary pair (the pairing of the two terms itself, the subsequent association of attributes, and their valuation) is, I suggest, arbitrary and can be negotiated. In order to validate this claim, it is necessary to briefly consider these three steps.

[42] I originally developed this methodology for my master's thesis, which examined mid-Victorian fiction: Elena Rebekka Götting, "'Monsters of Malice?' Victorian Women Writers and Masculinity", Philipps-Universität Marburg, 2008.

Pairing

> The binarization of the sexes, the dichotomisation of the world and of knowledge has been effected already at the threshold of Western reason.[43]
>
> Elisabeth Grosz

Binary pairs can be found in all cultures. They impose order on the world by introducing partner concepts, and within each binary connection, both concepts gain additional identity through being defined as the other's opposite. However, the pairing of two concepts in a binary is in itself deeply problematic. Consider, for example, the binary day – night. Although the partnering of these concepts seems to be based on a universal human experience, its specific meaning is subject to the culture that employs it. In the polar regions and in large parts of Scandinavia, for instance, day and night have different implications than in areas closer to the earth's equatorial belt.

As cultural concepts evolve to greater complexity, the seemingly intuitive tendency to form binary concepts becomes gradually more problematic. Consider, as an example, the binary heterosexual – homosexual. The intricacy of each individual concept has not prevented the two from being paired in a binary, at the expense of other valid options (why not pair heterosexual with bisexual, or asexual?). The first problem about binaries, then, is that the pairing of concepts itself is arbitrary. Binary relations, even those that seem to suggest themselves from the observation of natural rules, are cultural constructions.[44]

The second problem inherent in the pairing of two (more or less arbitrarily chosen) concepts is the fact that a binary relation perforce privileges the differences between the two terms thus connected, over and at the expense of their similarities. In

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[43] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 5.

[44] The arbitrariness of binaries had already been noted by Ferdinand de Saussure – cf. for instance John Sturrock, *Structuralism*, Fontana Movements and Ideas, ed. Justin Wintle, (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 15. However, the problematic nature of this arbitrariness is not revealed as distinctly in the case of phonemic opposition as it is in the case of opposition between complex cultural concepts.

an essay entitled "Gender and Dichotomy", the feminist philosopher Nancy Jay has suggested that the mere pairing of two concepts in a binary – what she calls an A/Not-A opposition – by definition erases the possibility of overlap between these two concepts. According to Jay, all binaries are constructed on three abstract logical principles: the "Principle of Identity (if anything is A, it is A); the Principle of Contradiction (nothing can be both A and Not-A); and the Principle of the Excluded Middle (anything, and everything, must be either A or Not-A)".[45]

Because of the "Principle of the Excluded Middle", any two terms which are brought into binary opposition are artificially constructed as incommensurable. Jay is especially careful to point out that the three logical principles which govern the formation of binary pairs do not correspond to a universe in which most, if not all things, are actually in a state of flux. If we consider the example of man and woman, for instance, the pairing of these concepts in a binary enforces an abstract logical understanding of the two terms as radically different – as oppositional – when in reality, this is an incorrect assumption. The incommensurability suggested by the binary pairing is established at the cost of a host of similarities between individuals who, for the purpose of opposing them, are defined exclusively or at least predominantly in terms of their sex. This in turn negates the (potentially) infinite similarities between individuals of the "opposite" sex (both men and women can be, for instance, tax payers, dog owners, residents of town X, spouses, parents, fans of a particular team, conservatives, or liberals, and both certainly are carbon-based life forms, human beings, and subject to mortality). The mere formation of binary pairs, then, is problematic, because the deceptively simple act of connecting concepts through binary opposition creates the fiction of incommensurability between two concepts whose very connection is arbitrary to begin with, and which have, at any time, more in common than differentiates them.

[45] Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy": p. 42.

Attribute Clustering

In addition to the arbitrariness of the original pairing, I would like to suggest another point of arbitrariness which, in my view, pertains inseparably to the formation of any binary pair: the formation of attribute clusters. Consider the following statement by Elizabeth Grosz:

> the mind/body opposition has always been correlated with a number of oppositional pairs. Lateral associations link the mind/body opposition to a whole series of other oppositional (binarized) terms, enabling them to function interchangeably, at least in certain contexts.[46]

The idea of correlation which Grosz introduces here is a focal point of my thesis. In truth, it would seem an impossible task to come up with a binary pair that does not carry a host of associated concepts on both sides of the opposition. In the binary day – night, it seems reasonable to assume that attributes commonly associated with the concept of day are (for instance) light, warmth, and safety, and that these are mirrored in the attributes darkness, cold, and danger commonly associated with the concept of night. Attribute clusters define binary opposition: they add additional meaning and depth to the incommensurability established between the original pair by, in Grosz's terms, correlating with it. Similarly to the attribute clusters of day and night, the concepts of man and woman had already acquired a host of associated attributes which defined the pair, both positively and negatively, at the time when New Woman fiction was flourishing.[47]

At first glance, attribute clusters are as inconspicuous as the formation of the binary itself. Association is a basic function of intelligence which is not even reserved for humans; a wide range of other animals displays this ability as well, if on a lower scale. On the face of it, there seems to be nothing arbitrary about associating the concept

[46] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 3.
[47] Either concept in a binary pair derives identity also from its lack of the attributes associated with the partner concept – hence, "negative" definition.

day with the attribute light. However, just as the pairing of concepts in a binary is arbitrary and simplistic, the attribute clusters that form around binary pairs partake in this arbitrariness. Although the concepts in a simple binary such as day and night seem to connect naturally to "their" attributes, upon closer examination this turns out to be another fiction. Polar nights can be quite light, and tropical nights are warm compared to at least half of all days in a mid-European country. Accordingly, although the attribute clusters of day and night seem to have universal application, these clusters are actually highly specific to the time and locale of their origin.

As a further example, consider the binary pair forest – human settlement. While in itself an arbitrary binary connection (it can only be established through the lens of human culture), the attributes commonly associated with the two terms (forest with danger, settlement with safety) have not only lost their relation to the reality of modern Europeans, but have actually been turned on their head. From the early beginnings of human settlement until well after the days in which Shakespeare used this binary to structure *Midsummer Night's Dream*, it made a certain amount of sense to associate the attribute danger with the concept of forest. However, considering how infinitely more likely a person in our day and part of the world is to come to harm in one of our cities, as opposed to one of our forests, and considering for how long this has been so, and not the other way around, the attribute clusters of this binary should have been reversed many years ago. And yet it seems safe to assume that most people would readily prefer a night alone in a big city to a night alone in a small forest. The attribute clusters of forest and human settlement, although they have become to some extent arbitrary, are handed down the generations as if nothing has changed.[48]

[48] The concept of human settlement is itself internally divided into more binaries. During the nineteenth century, the polluted, potentially infinite city was often contrasted with the small wholesome village. Notice that an associated attribute cluster was immediately formed to define the new phenomenon of large cities against that of small villages, although since these are merely two different types of human settlement, there is the broadest possible overlap between the two concepts.

This tendency of attribute clusters to remain alive even after the conditions of their creation have become radically altered is both a foundation of human culture, and deeply problematic. On the one hand, attribute clusters are excellent building blocks for the construction of stories, as even Shakespeare's use of the binary couple forest – human settlement suggests. They often become a kind of cultural shorthand that enables the passing on of valuable information. Binary terms and their attribute clusters are thus an important part of human culture. On the other hand, it is problematic that their construction is so vulnerable to arbitrariness. Even associations that seem to represent natural rules (forest with danger) run the risk of becoming outdated. Moreover, many attribute associations never had a "natural" justification in the first place – consider, for instance, the association of hot and dry with men, and cold and wet with women in Renaissance permutations of the system of humorism,[49] or, perhaps more elucidating, the historical association of "single old woman" with evil. This latter example is particularly helpful because it complicates even the positive aspects of binaries and their clusters mentioned just above: their potential to serve as story building blocks.

On a daily basis, every member of a society that has acquired a basic grasp of his or her cultural matrix relies on attribute clusters for a broad range of decisions, yet as a rule, these decisions are not questioned as to their underlying assumptions, and most people remain unaware of how crucially their interaction with other people and with their culture is affected by their acquired knowledge of the attribute clusters of binary concepts. For instance, there are colour guides for marketing and advertisement that predict how people will react to a product package tinted in red as opposed to blue, based on the finding that many cultures tend to associate red with aggression, and blue with placidity. This is despite the fact that red and blue are an arbitrary pair of concepts,

[49] The system of humorism, which originated in the theories of Galen of Pergamon around the second century A.D., is a good example of mankind's lasting fascination with binaries – for centuries, its practitioners attempted to cure illness based on (arbitrary) binary oppositions of body fluids.

and that the association of character attributes to colour values is at best non-intuitive. For an example which better illustrates the problematic nature of attribute associations, consider the fact that most children growing up today are trained in various circumstances to associate ugliness with evil, for unless his or her ugliness adds to the moral,[50] the hero or heroine of a children's story is unlikely to be ugly, in contrast to the villain. Continental Punch-and-Judy shows operate with entire subsets of characters that are readily identifiable by their facial features, clothes and colours. These attribute clusters are crucial to efficient storytelling, yet they also train children to connect certain facial features with an evil disposition.

The same considerations apply to the concepts of man and woman. Both acquired a host of attributes during the many years of this binary's currency, and in analogy to the examples above, these attribute clusters began to dominate the perception of what the individual man or woman was supposed to be like. At some point during the history of our culture, an ugly hero, a fiery red package for sleeping pills, and a strong woman all became suspicious. In conclusion, attribute clusters are not innocent constructions. They crucially influence the way a culture thinks about the binary terms with which they become associated. The greatest danger, perhaps, lies in the fact that attribute clusters have a habit of posing as natural – as if the binary concept to which they have become attached somehow suggested them in the first place.

[50] As for instance in Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831), or Hans Christian Andersen's famous fairy tale "The Ugly Duckling" (1843).

Valuation

> Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart.[51]
>
> Elisabeth Grosz

Both Jacques Derrida and Nancy Jay have argued that the issue of valuation is intricately connected with the nature of binary opposition. I will trace Jay's line of thought here, because her account is more lucid than Derrida's. She writes:

> [t]o begin with, all dichotomous distinctions are not necessarily phrased as A/Not-A. Consider some differences between the phrasings A/B and A/Not-A. A and B are mere contraries, not logical contradictories, and continuity between them may be recognized without shattering the distinction.

Jay also points out that the dichotomy between man and woman is "particularly susceptible"[52] to being structured in the form of A/Not-A (a contradictory dichotomy), rather than as A/B (a contrary dichotomy). This susceptibility leads directly into the matter of valuation, for, as Jay points out, "in A/B distinctions both terms have positive reality. In A/Not-A dichotomies only one term has positive reality; Not-A is only the privation or absence of A".[53] This argument is congruous with Derrida's notion of absence versus presence as the structuring principle behind the valuation of binary opposites.[54] In his view, the negative term in any particular binary can be defined, quite simply, as the absence of its oppositional, positive term. Accordingly, weakness can be explained as the absence of strength, sickness is the absence of health. For a great many binary concepts, I think this is a valid thesis. However, I would like to complicate this

[51] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 3.
[52] Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy": p. 44, p. 43.
[53] Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy": p. 44.
[54] Interestingly, James Williams has pointed out that in the early reception of Derrida "he was seen as attempting to reverse key oppositions and hierarchies in the texts to be deconstructed . . . This would merely invert the presupposed metaphysics, replacing one by another". James Williams, *Understanding Poststructuralism* (2005), Understanding Movements in Modern Thought, ed. Jack Reynolds, (Chesham: Acumen, 2005), p. 30. Evidently it was difficult for critics to reject binary thinking even when they were responding to a text that urged the necessity of this rejection.

notion by claiming that the presence/absence dichotomy does not fully explain the negative valuation of all attributes to which a negative value is attached.

Consider for a moment the binary pair intellectuality – emotionality. Few people would deny that these two concepts indeed formed a binary pair for the time under consideration here, and it is equally safe to assume that intellectuality is generally seen as the positive term, emotionality as the devalued other. However, emotionality, taken by itself, is not an absence, and certainly not simply a lack of intellectuality, but on the contrary a positive presence, a characteristic cognitive ability of the human race which presupposes an intelligence that is unique to humans.[55] This presents us with a puzzle: if emotionality is uniquely human, and furthermore a positive presence rather than an absence, how are we to explain the negative valuation it has gained during the course of history? In order to explain this phenomenon, I would like to advance the theory that, within an attribute cluster, valuation is contagious. Instead of assuming that valuation always arises from an absence/presence differentiation, I suggest that attributes which are clustered together assume a similar value, even if none or very few of them constitute an "original" absence or presence, as the case may be.[56] In short, I propose that attributes generally take on the valuation of the cluster they are associated with.[57]

If we consider the hypothetical case that the cluster of woman was valued negatively by the time emotionality was "added", because it already contained one or more absences, one can conjecture that the previous valuation of woman as the negative

[55] For the sake of the argument, I am ignoring for a moment the controversial question of emotional intelligence in certain other species of animals.

[56] This process might of course work in the reverse, too. An unvalued binary concept might become valued as soon as a negative attribute is introduced into either cluster. Since this is a highly theoretical speculation, I will leave the matter undecided. The result – valuation by association – is, in any case, the same.

[57] It is not necessary to qualify this argument on the grounds that there are positive attributes in the cluster of woman, for, as Barbara Welter has pointed out, women's virtues could not be translated into universal human virtues, but were considered positive for and in women only. This, in the abstract, makes woman's virtues inferior to man's virtues. Welter names "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" as the four cardinal virtues of women under domestic ideology. None of these are readily applicable to men, and they are not therefore positive in relation to men's virtues, but rather only in relation to women's vices – in short, they are tainted by their connection to the concept of woman. Cf. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", *American Quarterly* 18.2 (1966), pp. 151-74: p. 152.

term of man subsequently tainted emotionality by infusing it with its own, negative value.[58] This process can be thought of as bilateral: not only does negative valuation travel within the attribute cluster, but so does positive. Thus the absence of emotionality (although clearly an absence) has been connoted positively because it forms a part of the positive attribute cluster of man.[59]

At this point, then, it seems necessary to differentiate between attributes that gain their valuation in a process of association with a cluster, and attributes that constitute an original absence – such as weakness (the absence of strength) and sickness (the absence of health), and which therefore have the power to infect others in their cluster with negative valuation. In this thesis, I will argue that in the process of renegotiating the binary code, attributes which have become negative by association can be reclaimed, while those attributes which constitute "true" absences, because they describe only a lack of a positive attribute, need to be discarded from the cluster of woman in order to effect a revaluation of the term. This distinction will become especially important in the third chapter of this thesis. For the moment, we need to note that, like attribute clustering and even the formation of binary pairs, valuation is an intrinsically arbitrary process, and like them, it is subject to historical changes.[60]

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[58] It is impossible to prove conclusively that the negative valuation of woman was caused in this way. Yet the subject invites speculation: cf. for instance Sherry B. Ortner on the idea that the concept of woman became "polluted" by her association with nature, in contradistinction to man's association with culture. Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?", in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds.), *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 72-3.

[59] It is perhaps needless to add that throughout history, many cultures have shown a tendency to value the concept of man positively against its perceived other, woman. Whether this positive valuation stems from the association of man with presences rather than absences is a matter of speculation, however, this interpretation follows from Derrida's analysis of valued binaries.

[60] Note, for instance, Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whitford's argument that intuition, a close relative of emotionality and likewise seen as a feminine attribute in the Victorian Period, was a decidedly positive, masculine quality to Thomas Aquinas and his culture in thirteenth century Italy. Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whitford, "Introduction", in Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whitford (eds.), Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), p. 7.

On the Arbitrariness of Valued Binaries – Thesis Structure

The conclusion emerges that binary constructions are thrice arbitrary: firstly, the pairing of concepts itself is subject to the observer's viewpoint; secondly, attribute associations either become arbitrary over time or were arbitrary to begin with; and thirdly, valuation likewise depends on cultural, never on natural, rules. In my view, many New Women writers exploited this arbitrariness of the binary code of the sexes in their writing, and their depiction of masculinity and of femininity often denies the notion of natural sex-specific attributes, and emphasises the cultural origin of gender opposition instead.

If we translate the above considerations into the terms of the particular binary under discussion here, namely, the binary code of the sexes, a writer who takes issue with this code might be offended, either by the exclusive association of certain attributes with "their" binary concept (all women are emotional and docile, and no woman is brave and strong), or by the cultural practice of valuing feminine attributes less highly than masculine ones (being emotional is always inferior to being intellectual). Both of these responses can be observed in many New Women novels. When Beth Caldwell in Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, for instance, complains that "feminine attributes are all inferior to masculine attributes",[61] she addresses what I have termed the matter of valuation. The protagonist's ability (and inclination) to display what were considered to be naturally masculine attributes, such as genius, strength, determination, or intellectuality, likewise lies at the heart of many New Women novels.

The ideology of separate spheres had come under discussion long before New Women writing flourished in the 1890s. Since at least the middle of the nineteenth century, the women's movement had been growing and defining its profile. Various political campaigns, organised by women and on subjects that pertained to women,

[61] Sarah Grand, *The Beth Book* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), p. 354. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: BB p. 354. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).

served to heighten a sense of community.[62] Education reforms, such as the 1870 Elementary Education Act, brought literacy rates to new heights.[63] Local franchise was won in 1882 for women with the necessary property – meantime, the agitation for the vote remained unsuccessful, but was nonetheless maintained persistently.[64] Accordingly, the ideology of the separate spheres was already under heavy attack when New Woman fiction, in its turn, further contested the notion that men and women were diametrically opposed in all their attributes, and therefore of different worth.

In this thesis, a wide range of novels will be examined in which I perceive an attempt either to revalue feminine attributes, or to prove that positive masculine attributes do not naturally pertain only to men, but occur in women as well. For simplicity's sake, I have named these two approaches *revaluation* and *re-association*. Revaluation, in this thesis, will denote what I see as an attempt by many New Women authors to renegotiate gender stereotypes by arguing that women, although they possess a wide range of sex-specific attributes and are thus naturally and crucially different from men, should be valued identically, because their natural attributes, and the feminine behavioural patterns and approaches to complex problems which result from them, are as good or better than those of traditional men. Re-association, in contrast, will describe my perception of the New Woman's attempts to achieve gender equality by arguing that men and women are essentially the same, by creating characters who "re-associate" attributes from their opposite sex.

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[62] The latter half of the 19th century produced several tireless campaigners, such as Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Annie Besant and Josephine Butler. A wide range of issues, from the promotion of women's education to the prohibition of vivisection, gathered a wealth of female supporters.

[63] *Public General Acts, 33 & 34 Victoria I., c. 75*. In addition, women's higher education was seeing similar improvements. The first colleges for women date from before the middle of the century: Queen's College was founded in 1848, and Bedford College in 1849. Although access to these colleges remained limited to a very small and privileged minority, they were symbols of change.

[64] Petitions for the enfranchisement of women were brought before parliament regularly after the first attempt by MPs John Stuart Mill and Henry Fawcett to add an amendment to the Reform Act was defeated in 1866.

It may be noted at once that these two different approaches to renegotiating the binary coding of man and woman are the result of diametrically opposed positions: to argue for revaluation, an author must to some extent be convinced of woman's natural difference from man, whereas to argue for re-association is to argue for a broad range of similarities between the sexes – an idea which undermines the traditional Victorian notion of natural sex differences. Perhaps surprisingly, many New Women authors did not seem to have an issue with alternating between these two approaches, sometimes in one and the same novel, a fact which is reflected by the inclusion of two novels each by Sarah Grand, Mary Cholmondeley and Iota into very different chapters of my thesis. For the purpose of clarity, however, I will describe revaluation and re-association separately in this work.

The New Woman's attempt to reconstruct the binary code through the revaluation of traditional feminine attributes will be the subject of my first chapter. Using the examples of Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, Olive Schreiner's *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...*, Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*, and Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage*, I will argue that the elevation of such feminine attributes which had become negative by association (rather than because they represent absences) was achieved in these novels mainly through constructing traditional male characters as villains. These male characters, which correspond to the "type" of New Woman's man identified by Hugh Stutfield, and which I refer to as *binary men* in my study, discredit traditional masculine attributes, and it will be my argument that the combination of the evil binary man and the positive, self-sacrificing protagonist causes the reader to reconsider the traditional valuation of gender roles. I will also consider Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, and Emma Frances Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman*, as examples of novels in which feminine self-sacrifice is foregone, and attempt to trace the effects of this aspect on the protagonist's appeal.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I will examine another frequent approach to reconstructing the binary code: the destruction of traditional attribute clusters through creating "masculine" women and "feminine" men. This approach complicates the traditional Victorian notion of inborn, sex-specific attributes by creating male and female characters who re-associate qualities which they should not possess according to the binary code.[65] In Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* and *The Heavenly Twins*, George Egerton's "A Regeneration of Two", and Lady Florence Dixie's *Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900*, I will examine a type of male character who corresponds to the one that Margaret Oliphant reacted to in her account of New Woman fiction: the feminine or *impaired man* who is physically incapable of fulfilling the traditional masculine role in his relationship with the protagonist, and who consequently encourages and endorses her development of masculine attributes. I will argue that the combination of the impaired man's femininity and the protagonist's responding maleness poses a serious challenge to the fiction of binary opposition between the sexes. I will also consider L. T. Meade's *A Girl of the People* as an adverse example. The first two chapters thus examine the permutations of the binary code of the sexes that are achieved through the introduction of binary and impaired male characters. I will argue that this specific way of constructing male characters – as "bullies" or as "puppets" – exploits what I have identified above as two of the arbitrary connections that destabilise the binary code.

In the third and fourth chapters, I revisit both of these approaches to examine their limitations with regard to the representation of masculinity. The third chapter discusses a phenomenon which I will refer to as *recoil* – the surprisingly positive

[65] Note that when Ann Heilmann makes a distinction between "feminist" and "feminine" values in her study on New Woman fiction and juxtaposes "independence, courage, . . . knowledge, intellect, education, strength of body and mind, self-determination, and purposefulness [the feminist values] to motherliness, domesticity, gentleness and purity [the feminine values]") she has actually re-associated the former attributes from their traditional connection to *man*, even if she does not make this step explicit (Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 33.). Intellect and independence, during the time frame under consideration in this study, were masculine attributes which needed to be forcefully extracted from the cluster of man in order to claim them as "feminist" values. It is precisely these hidden processes that I want to uncover in this thesis.

treatment that some New Women novels extend to male characters despite these characters' firm belief in the binary opposition of the sexes, and their attempts to lead the New Woman protagonist back into the constraints of the old gender roles. I refer to this type of male character as the *heroic man*, a term which emphasises the dream quality of the novels analysed in this chapter: Jessie Fothergill's *Kith and Kin*, Mary Cholmondeley's *Diana Tempest*, and Iota's *A Yellow Aster*. The third chapter suggests that the New Woman's departure from the binary code and her deprecatory view of traditional masculinity at times alternated with a violent longing for the safety of the old structures. Nevertheless, as I will attempt to show, even such New Women novels which depict traditional masculinity positively often make an effort to clean the attribute cluster of woman from those attributes which constitute true absences, such as a lack of strength or brainpower. Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina* will be considered as an adverse example. The fourth chapter re-examines the concept of the impaired man by analysing novels in which the male character's impairment is of a particularly severe type. While the temporary impairment examined in the second chapter is welcomed by the protagonists for its liberating effects, an excess of impairment often causes a catastrophe. This circumstance leads me to examine the boundaries of the concept, and its limited usefulness for the renegotiation of the binary code. The novels selected for close reading in this chapter are Vernon Lee's *Miss Brown*, Annie E. Holdsworth's *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, and Iota's *Poor Max*. Together, these four chapters analyse a number of recurring types of male characters in New Woman fiction, and the conclusion ties my observations together into a comprehensive account of the New Woman's renegotiation of the binary code.[66]

[66] Please note that the approach of this work is inclusive rather than selective. Reading a great number of New Women novels has enabled me to identify underlying currents and similarities, to which attention will be drawn in footnotes at the appropriate moments. However, because of this particular approach, the differences between individual works have of necessity receded further to the background than is perhaps usual. This is not an oversight, but rather a necessary reduction of focus. Discovering elements of

The Binary Code of the Sexes

At this point, it might be expected that I give an overview of the historical development of what I have called the binary code of the sexes, as well as a list of attributes that I see as belonging to either the cluster of the binary concept of woman, or that of man. In response to this expectation, it is essential to emphasise that my notion of the binary code is not an entirely new approach. In principle, I use *binary code* to refer to the notion of separate spheres that structured Victorian notions of sex and gender. I have chosen this term, rather than the more established terms of "separate spheres" or "domestic ideology", because it draws attention to the mechanisms of binary thinking, but the body of criticism which exists to explain domestic ideology (its origins and expression) can equally be referred to for an explanation of what I call the binary code. I will therefore refer briefly here to a number of studies which trace the development of the ideology of the separate spheres, and to which I can safely leave the establishment, so far as it is possible, of the origin and the nature of the opposite attribute clusters of the sexes, such as they were at the time when the New Woman began to write.

I have found a number of studies on this subject very helpful. Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, for instance, draws attention to the shift from the one-sex model to the two-sex model which, according to him, occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century, and which first made the oppositional position of the concepts of man and woman possible.[67] Tim Hitchcock has argued that during the latter half of the eighteenth century, a redefinition of sex – specifically, of what counted as sexual acts – likewise helped to install men and women

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deconstruction in New Woman writing necessitates a relatively structural approach, and this in turn necessitates a simplification of the works thus examined as parts of a system. As John Sturrock has pointed out in defence of structuralism, "Each text and author *is* unique, but in order to understand what this uniqueness is one needs to understand the literary 'system' within which they exist." Sturrock, *Structuralism*, p. 103, Sturrock, *Structuralism*.

[67] Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

in opposition to one another.[68] Dror Wahrman, who has written with great insight and considerable thoroughness about the prologues and epilogues of around six hundred plays written during the middle and the ending of the eighteenth century,[69] arrives at the same conclusion as Hitchcock and Laqueur, namely, that there was a cataclysmic change in people's tolerance of gender confusion that resulted in the solidification of the two sexes as diametrically opposed categories[70] of the human race. All of these researchers furthermore agree in connecting these changes in the gender roles to the social upheaval which characterised this particular age, rather than any scientific discoveries in the field of human biology (Laqueur emphasises the French Revolution, Wahrmann the American Civil War).[71] These considerations complete a number of older explanations for the formation of the separate spheres, which are summarised by Ellen Jordan:

> The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the emergence of industrial capitalism, the separation of work and home that this necessitated, and the development of a new gender ideology, now usually called the "domestic ideology," which legitimated the new relations between the sexes caused by the separation of work and home.[72]

In addition, several scholars have examined how the nineteenth century itself added to, rather than subtracted from, the pervasiveness of this ideology. Rosemary Jann has examined how the discoveries of Darwin were structured to fit the prevailing notion of the sexes as binary opposites,[73] and several scholars, most notably Ann Heilmann and Lucy Delap, have pointed out that even late Victorian sexologists such as Havelock

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[68] Tim Hitchcock, "Sex and Gender: Redefining Sex in Eighteenth-Century England", *History Workshop Journal* 41 (1996), pp. 72-90.
[69] Dror Wahrman, "Percy's Prologue: From Gender Play to Gender Panic in Eighteenth-Century England", *Past & Present* 159 (1998), pp. 113-60.
[70] Laqueur calls this the new "incommensurability" of the sexes. Cf. Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 173.
[71] Especially in the epilogue, cf. Wahrman, "From Gender Play to Gender Panic": p. 156.
[72] Ellen Jordan, "'Making Good Wives and Mothers?' The Transformation of Middle-Class Girls' Education in Nineteenth-Century Britain", *History of Education Quarterly* 31.4 (1991), pp. 439-62: p. 443.
[73] Rosemary Jann, "Darwin and the Anthropologists: Sexual Selection and Its Discontents", in Andrew H. Miller and James Eli Adams (eds.), *Sexualities in Victorian Britain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

Ellis, Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, and Edward Carpenter failed to disentangle men and women from their simplistic binary relation.[74] The result of this binary opposition between men and women was a long list of sex-specific attributes.

As to proposing a list of gendered attributes for the time under consideration in this thesis, I am convinced that anyone who has inherited the Victorian's geo-cultural spaces can still access the binary code of the sexes, if from a position of historical distance.[75] This is all the more true for scholars of Victorian literature. Insofar, I trust there will be no surprises and no controversy at my calling certain attributes, in this thesis, "masculine" or "feminine". Doubtless, for many if not for all attributes, one could trace the process of how they came to be associated with one or the other sex, but such a process is lengthy and must to some extent involve guess-work. It is also, under the present conditions, quite unnecessary. A simple example can prove this: if I were to suggest a number of random attributes – strong, emotional, passive, brave, chaste, and logical – I am convinced that there would be no discussion over how these attributes relate to the concepts man and woman, always supposing that we attempt to order them with a view to the "ideal" of a man and a woman during the period under consideration. The following outcome is highly likely:

[74] Ann Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire: Cross-Dressing and the Crisis of Gender in New Woman Fiction", *Journal of Victorian Culture* 5 (2000), pp. 83-111: p. 94 and Lucy Delap, "The Superwoman: Theories of Gender and Genius in Edwardian Britain", *The Historical Journal* 47.1 (2004), pp. 101-26: esp. p. 106. On the other hand, a number of historians have pointed out that an ideology must be considered critically with regard to its effectiveness in real life. Cf. for instance: Robert Brink Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London: Longman, 1998). Also cf. Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History", *The Historical Journal* 36.2 (1993), pp. 383-414. Since I am considering fictional characters rather than historical ones, this restriction does not affect my findings, although I fully agree with the sentiment as such.

[75] Whether average modern Westerners possess historical distance from the gendering of attributes prevalent during the Victorian Age or not is an interesting question, but to debate it would go beyond the scope of my work. In all likelihood, modern readers will not perceive all of those attributes which were gendered in Victorian times as gendered, but they will be aware of the historical association even if they do not personally share this view.

Masculine strong, brave, logical

Feminine emotional, passive, chaste

Since I am not exploring the origin of the attribute clusters of the binary code of the sexes, but their permutation under the reconstruction of the code in New Woman writing, I will rely on the reader's previous knowledge of the Victorian gendering of attributes, and draw attention only to the way in which it changes during the *fin de siècle*. To sum up, when I refer to the binary code of the sexes in this thesis, I mean the set of assumptions which underlie the ideology of the separate spheres: one, that man is the opposite of woman, two, that men naturally display only a certain set of attributes, and three, that these attributes – and, consequently, men – are better than feminine attributes, and hence women in general.[76]

[76] Throughout this thesis, I use "female/male" to refer to an individual's biology, and "masculine/feminine" to refer to culturally constructed notions of gender. Accordingly, attributes are here referred to as "masculine", rather than as "male", precisely because I wish to suggest that their association with the male sex is cultural and not natural. However, I have decided against the continued use of quotation marks for the phrase masculine attributes (feminine attributes), since their frequent repetition might have turned them into a source of irritation for the reader. Where I use this phrase without quotation marks, it must be remembered that I do not mean to suggest that the attribute in question naturally pertains to men, but rather that it was associated with men during the New Woman period.

I. REVALUATION AND THE PHENOMENON OF THE BINARY MAN

> [T]here never was a time when the sexes stood wider apart than at present; and when man is represented by so many lady novelists as a blackguard or an idiot, or both, sometimes diseased, always a libertine and a bully, one can hardly wonder at the result.[1]
>
> Hugh Stutfield

Among critics of New Woman fiction, the type of man that Hugh Stutfield complained about in his 1897 article "The Psychology of Feminism" has received wide-spread attention. Emma Liggins, for instance, has used another of Hugh Stutfield's articles on the topic for her designation of this type as the "husband-fiend",[2] a group into which she includes Colonel George Colquhoun and Sir Mosley Menteith of Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twin*s, Dr Dunlop Strange of Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman*, and Lord Heriot of Emma Frances Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman*.[3] All four men, Liggins maintains, are sexual predators who infect the New Woman protagonist (sometimes directly, sometimes figuratively) with venereal diseases, and all four characters serve the same political function, in that they

> allowed women writers to register their disapproval of male behaviour and to voice through their heroines their anger at the medical and social treatment of diseased women.[4]

In her 2002 thesis, Barbara Tilley has likewise identified a group of male characters to which she refers simply as "the husbands".[5] Tilley juxtaposes these husbands to the figure of the lover in Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael*, Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, and Emma Frances Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman*, and argues that the

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[1] Stutfield, "The Psychology of Feminism": p. 116.
[2] The term was used by Hugh Stutfield to describe the type in New Woman fiction in his 1895 article "Tommyrotics". Cf. Hugh E. M. Stutfield, "Tommyrotics", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 157 (1895), pp. 833-45: p. 835.
[3] Emma Liggins, "Writing against the 'Husband-Fiend': Syphilis and Male Sexual Vice in the New Woman Novel", *Women's Writing* 7.2 (2000), pp. 175-95: p. 188.
[4] Liggins, "Writing against the 'Husband-Fiend'": p. 176.
[5] Tilley, "New Men?", p. 5.

husbands are represented either as threatening patriarchal figures who subdue the protagonist, or as ineffectual, and that the figure of the lover is elevated in comparison to that of the husband.[6]

In this chapter, I likewise propose to concentrate on what I see as a distinct group of male characters in New Woman fiction. Contrary to Emma Liggins, I include in this group not only those male characters who infect the protagonist with a sexual disease, but rather all those who display a marked adherence to the traditional view of the gender roles, and who try to force the New Woman protagonist into fulfilling traditional role expectations. This definition is more inclusive than that of either Emma Liggins or Barbara Tilley, because it allows for the examination of fathers, brothers, and uncles, who likewise figure prominently in New Woman fiction, and who are often portrayed as having a similar effect on the protagonist to that of the husband. Nonetheless, my analysis focuses predominantly on husbands, simply because they are such a frequent feature of New Woman fiction.

Of the male characters analysed in this chapter – Daniel Maclure of Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, Frank of Olive Schreiner's *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...*, Hubert Temperley of Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*, and James Gresley of Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* – none are carriers of sexual disease, although two (Daniel and Frank) are associated with sexual licentiousness. Nevertheless, many of the observations made by Tilley and Liggins hold true for this sample group as well, and, conversely, some of my findings can be usefully applied to a reading of the diseased men identified as a group by Emma Liggins.

I will refer to the type of male character examined here as the *binary man*.[7] It is perhaps unusual to introduce such a label at the beginning of a chapter, rather than to

[6] Tilley, "New Men?", p. 9.
[7] This term emphasises the centrality of a character's attitude to the gender roles for my analysis more than other labels which have previously been suggested, such as "traditional man" or "Old Man",

develop it inductively, but because of the number of novels considered here, the deductive approach has been given preference. The precise meaning of the term will be developed in this chapter, but the variety of novels and characters considered has made it necessary to introduce the term before its justification.[8] Likewise, I will make a limited number of general observations on the nature of the binary man before supplying supportive evidence for my reading.

Considering that the definition which underlies the label binary man in this chapter is extremely inclusive – nothing but a traditional view of the gender roles is presupposed – one would expect the characters in this group to be very varied. In reality, this is not the case: binary men show an astonishing number of similarities aside from their belief in traditional gender roles. One similarity is that most traditionally-minded men in New Woman fiction are husbands or fathers, rather than friends or lovers, and thus are "imbued with excess power to control women", as Barbara Tilley has argued about the figure of the husband.[9] Likewise, binary men are often described as "deceptively" handsome. This is especially true for husbands. For instance, Daniel Maclure's teeth are "good, but too far apart"[10] in *The Beth Book*, a defect which disturbs Beth. In *The Wing of Azrael*, Philip Dendraith's smile is perfect, yet its very perfection gives other characters "a shiver".[11] George Colquhoun (*The Heavenly Twins*), although he is physically attractive to Evadne during their courtship, is actually balding and looks

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although I will use these sporadically to vary my writing. Where I use the terms "traditional" or "Old Men", they will be used as synonymous with binary man.

[8] Other characters of New Woman Fiction which I read as binary include: Philip Dendraith and Mr Sedley of Mona Caird's WoA, Lord Heriot of Emma Frances Brooke's ASW, Lord Brinkhampton of Sarah Grand's short story "Eugenia", Lord Westray of Lady Florence Dixie's GL, Colonel George Colquhoun, Sir Mosley Menteith and Mr Frayling of Sarah Grand's HT, Lyndall's stranger and Bonaparte Blenkins of Olive Schreiner's SAF, Vincent Hemming and Dr Dunlop Strange of Ella Hepworth Dixon's SMW, Mr Caldwell (who has a later change of heart) and James Patten of Sarah Grand's BB, and William Stopford and Lord Annesley of Florence Marryat's *The Nobler Sex*.

[9] Tilley, "New Men?", p. 9.

[10] BB p. 349.

[11] Mona Caird, *The Wing of Azrael*, Alexandra Warwick (ed.) in: Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (gen. ed.), *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899*, vol. 3 of 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), p. 24. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: WoA p. 24.

care-worn and tired, which she notices only after her wedding.[12] James Gresley of *Red Pottage* is pleasant to look at from afar, the narrator says, and yet, "a second closer glance was discouraging".[13] In each case, a superficial survey of the binary man satisfies the protagonist, but upon closer examination, his beauty turns out to be marred by a subtle defect.[14]

In addition, the male characters who embrace the traditional notions of gender in New Woman fiction generally pursue a highly regarded and well-established profession that carries with it a measure of authority in society. Many binary men are in the Church or the army (for instance, George Colquhoun of *The Heavenly Twins* and Henry Caldwell of *The Beth Book* are soldiers, Edith's father in *The Heavenly Twins* and James Gresley in *Red Pottage* are clergymen), as lawyers or doctors (Hubert Temperley of *The Daughters of Danaus* is a lawyer, Daniel Maclure of *The Beth Book* and Dunlop Strange of *The Story of a Modern Woman* are doctors), and some are members of the landed gentry or nobility (as, for instance, the Sedley family of *The Wing of Azrael*, and Lords Heriot and Westray of *A Superfluous Woman* and *Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900*). While it is a fact that New Woman fiction was essentially a middle-class phenomenon, and the above professions span the classical canon of middle-class employment, it is equally true that most New Women novels introduce more bohemian professions, as well as less distinguished ones. However, New Woman literature's

[12] Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins* 3 vols. (London: W. Heinemann, 1893), (vol. 1) p. 78. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: HT (vol. 1) p. 78. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).
[13] Mary Cholmondeley, *Red Pottage*, Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (ed.) in: Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (gen. ed.), *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899*, vol. 9 of 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p. 37. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: RP p. 37.
[14] Casey Althea Cothran is of the opinion that teaching their young female readers how to "scan" men for signs of depravity is an important objective of many New Women authors. Casey Althea Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire in the Era of the New Woman", Ph.D., University of Tennessee, 2003, p. 17. I would like to add that, in many cases, New Women authors use this concept of flawed beauty even if the binary man is not actually diseased, and where the marking of his sins upon his face is therefore not logical from a biological point of view (cf. for instance Philip Dendraith's cruelty in WoA or James Gresley's fanaticism in RP). The fact that New Women authors frequently introduce malformation as an indicator of an evil disposition both suggests a certain latent belief in physiognomy, and – sadly – perpetuates another old and harmful binary opposition, namely, the idea that the beautiful is good, and the ugly evil.

poets, painters, and singers, and at the opposite end of the spectrum, its factory workers and social reformers, are not binary men. New Woman fiction as a genre thus reveals itself to be highly suspicious of the established professions of the middle and upper classes.

Perhaps the most provocative similarity between traditional male characters in various New Women novels is the fact that they are often crucially corrupted and deeply flawed.[15] Among their most common flaws is a sexually predatory nature.[16] Binary men are also typically arrogant and delight in verbal or psychological cruelty towards women in general, and the protagonist in particular.[17] Lastly, they often display an exceptional physical cruelty towards animals and/or people.[18] In my view, these similarities justify the grouping of these male characters from quite different New Women novels into a common category, yet the crucial question that suggests itself is why this category exists. I will argue below that the depiction of traditionally-minded male characters as tyrants serves a similar function in many different New Women novels, namely, to discredit the traditional valuation of man and woman. By juxtaposing the (flawed) masculinity of the Old Man to the New Woman protagonist's traditionally feminine response, many New Women writers attempted to encourage a reconsideration of the supposed superiority of masculine attributes.

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[15] Notable exceptions will be the subject of the third chapter.

[16] Exhibited, for instance, by Henry Caldwell and Daniel Maclure of BB, Frank of MtM, George Colquhoun and Sir Mosley Menteith of HT, Lord Westray of GL, Professor Theobald of DoD, Dunlop Strange of SMW, Lord Heriot of ASW, and Philip Dendraith of WoA. Emma Liggins has pointed out that this trope was directly influenced by Ibsen's plays: "Ibsen's obsession with the sexual behaviour of husbands echoed through the New Woman novel as the husband's diseased sexuality was recognised as one of the major threats to female sexual fulfilment within marriage". Liggins, "Writing against the 'Husband-Fiend'": p. 183.

[17] For instance, Hubert Temperley in DoD, Frank in MtM, Lord Westray in GL, Daniel Maclure and Henry Caldwell in BB, Philip Dendraith and Mr Sedley in WoA, Professor Theobald in DoD, Lyndall's stranger in SAF, Isaac Dent in GoP, James Gresley in RP, and Mr Frayling in HT.

[18] Cruelty towards animals characterises, for instance, Daniel Maclure of BB, Philip Dendraith of WoA and Frank of MtM, while cruelty against humans is displayed by Bonaparte Blenkins in SAF, Lord Westray in GL, Philip Dendraith in WoA, Mr Granger in GoP, and William Stopford and David Lord Annesley in Florence Marryat's *The Nobler Sex*.

The Beth Book, Sarah Grand

Sarah Grand (Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke) published *The Beth Book* in 1897 as the third novel of a trilogy she had begun in 1888 with *Ideala*. Its immediate predecessor, *The Heavenly Twins*, was one of the bestsellers of the period. Unlike the latter, however, *The Beth Book* does not feature overly sensational elements, such as the syphilitic death of an innocent woman and child. The first part of the novel, which I will discuss here, follows the development of Beth Caldwell, a "woman of genius",[19] from an imaginative and tomboyish child who is braver and wilder than all her male acquaintances, into a marriage to a traditional, flawed man who subdues her.[20] Notwithstanding the seriousness of her subject matter, Grand's style in *The Beth Book* is often humorous and detached – more so than in *The Heavenly Twins*, for instance, where Grand's lighter touches remain strictly limited to her portrait of the twins Angelica and Diavolo, and never find their way into either Evadne's or Edith's story. In *The Beth Book*, the narrator's and Beth's own ironic distance from traditional Victorian values combine to make the novel read like a revision of many of the tropes which had come to characterise the genre during the preceding three years. Beth faces all of the disasters that typically befall different New Woman protagonists: she is born to unsympathetic parents like Viola Sedley (*The Wing of Azrael*), loses her supportive father[21] early like Mary Erle (*The Story of a Modern Woman*), is lured into marrying without informed consent like Evadne Frayling (*The Heavenly Twins*), and becomes trapped in a loveless marriage to a morally defective man like so many protagonists of New Woman fiction. In the midst of all these calamities, Beth remains curiously

[19] The subtitle of Grand's novel refers to Beth as "a woman of genius".
[20] My discussion of the second part of BB follows in the second chapter.
[21] Although Beth's father Henry Caldwell is initially selfish and tyrannical, especially towards his wife, he has a sudden change of heart when he falls ill. Unable to fulfil his professional duties and frequently bed-ridden, Henry suddenly develops an interest in Beth and begins to support and guide her. He also takes up gardening. The synchronicity of Henry's impairment through illness and his "new" mindset is a structure which I will examine in the following chapter.

unaffected. Grand herself dubbed Beth "a swallow of the women's summer",[22] and the novel's comparatively humorous tone and happy ending indeed suggest that here an author is settling her score with many of the topics and critics that shaped her career, and which she treated in bitter earnest only a few years previously. However, there is one topic that Grand approaches with undiminished spirit and fervour, namely, Beth's marriage to a traditionally-minded man who attempts to oppress her.

During the first half of the novel, Beth is described as an unusually headstrong and independent child who must be instructed and exhorted repeatedly to behave in a womanly way, whereas masculine attributes come to her naturally and need no cultivation. She has many male acquaintances, and from close contact with them discovers early on that the superiority of the male mind is a cultural fiction:

> [t]he thing about [her young men] that interested her most . . . was a certain assumption of superiority . . . Beth, perceiving that this superiority was not innate, tried to discover how it was acquired that she might cultivate it . . . She discovered that, in the estimation of men, feminine attributes are all inferior to masculine attributes. Any evidence of reasoning capacity in a woman they held to be abnormal, and they denied that women were ever logical. They had to allow that women's intuition was often accurate, but it was inferior, nevertheless, they maintained, to man's uncertain reason; and such qualities as were undeniable they managed to discount . . . This persistent endeavour to exalt themselves by lowering women struck Beth as mean, and made her thoughtful.[23]

Notwithstanding her early understanding of gender relations and her resulting wariness of traditional men, Beth is half coaxed and half bullied into accepting the proposal of Daniel Maclure, a medical doctor of strictly traditional views. Neither is he shy about voicing them in Beth's presence. During their courtship, for instance, Daniel comments on the subject of women in medicine:

> [women's innate over-emotionality] shows what folly it is for women to go in for medicine. They worry about this and that, things that are the

[22] BB p. 572.
[23] BB p. 297.

> patient's lookout, not the doctor's, and make no end of mischief; besides always losing their heads in a difficulty.[24]

This sweeping statement at once reveals that Daniel believes in innate sex-specific attributes (all women are constitutionally over-emotional) as well as in the traditional, negative valuation of these attributes (emotionality causes only "mischief" and is an inadequate response to a crisis). Daniel's subsequent behaviour only strengthens this initial impression of his strict adherence to the binary code of the sexes.

Considering how strongly Beth opposes male claims to superiority in her childhood, her choice of a husband is surprising, but perhaps even more surprising is her subsequent submission to him. For a considerable time after her wedding, she yields to Daniel in all matters:

> [h]er pin-money Dan regularly appropriated as soon as it arrived, with the facetious remark that it would just pay for her keep; and so far Beth had let him have it without a murmur, yielding in that as in all else, however much against her own inclinations, for gentleness, and also with a vague notion of making up to him in some sort of way for his own shortcomings, which she could not help fancying must be as great a trouble to him as they were to her.[25]

Beth's desire to act gently towards her faulty husband and her resulting self-restraint contrast markedly with the portrait Grand had given of her protagonist before her marriage. Although Beth used to be a wilful and dominant child, in the confrontation with Daniel she suddenly exhibits traditionally feminine attributes such as pity and gentleness. This reaction remains consistent for the first two years of her marriage, no matter the nature of Daniel's offence. For instance, she endures her husband's immoral chatter and his "incessant billing and cooing" rather than annoy him by refusing.[26] When she is tormented by his habit of intruding on her privacy (he reads her letters and enters her bedroom without permission) she complains meekly, and when Daniel does

[24] BB p. 354.
[25] BB pp. 383-4.
[26] BB p. 372.

not change she counters his intrusions by withdrawing into her secret study,[27] rather than by insisting on her rights.

Considering that as a child Beth had stoned and cursed a neighbour over an insult to her father's name which she barely understood, her meek submission to Daniel, in this and in many other scenes, seems almost eerie. All her natural aggression, described in great detail during the first half of the novel, seems wiped out. Earlier, the narrator had explained that "Beth's instinct was always to fight when she was in a rage; words break no bones, and she preferred to break bones at such times".[28] However, during the three years of her marriage, Beth's response to provocation is entirely different. Even when she discovers that her husband secretly oversees a lock hospital,[29] a fact which sickens her, she refuses to "break bones", and when she confronts Daniel about his post, his angry response again causes her to react in a characteristically feminine way: "[s]he hid her face in her hands, and suddenly burst into tears … [t]he iniquitous injustice and cruelty of it all made her sick and sorry for men".[30]

Perhaps the greatest injustice to which Daniel subjects his wife is his affair with a live-in patient three years into their marriage, which Beth discovers by chance. Again, she does not confront him, but instead withdraws into jealous fantasies and almost loses

[27] A number of critics have commented on this episode and on the connotations of the room's architecture. Cf. for instance: Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine*, pp. 183-4. Also cf. Mary Katherine McCullough, "Figuring Gender: British and American Women's Narratives of the 1890s", Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 1992, p. 98. and Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, pp. 185-9. The withdrawal into a private space (likewise: Rebekah in MtM), like the withdrawal into nature (Angelica in HT) or the night hours (Hester Gresley in RP), which is characteristic of many New Women protagonists, is a tacit rebellion against the binary man's control that does not violate accepted feminine behaviour.
[28] BB p. 59.
[29] During the nineteenth century, lock hospitals (which specialised on the treatment of venereal diseases) made an unjustified and counterproductive distinction between female and male infected bodies – while female prostitutes were retained by force, no inquiry was made into the health of their male clientele. The legal basis for this practice was supplied by the so called Contagious Diseases (CD) Acts, the first one of which was passed in 1864 and legalised compulsory examination and institutionalisation of women suspected of prostitution (cf. *Public General Acts, 27 & 28 Victoria I., c. 85*.). It was amended in 1866 and 1869. The resulting acts created unrest not least because of their aggressive flaunting of the sexual double standard of Victorian society. Many New Women novels address the matter, and Josephine Butler's campaign for the repeal of the acts likewise attracted considerable attention. The CD acts were repealed in 1886.
[30] BB p. 434.

her mind, until she is cured by the "knightly" face of a rider who accidentally passes by her window.[31] Beth's passivity, both in the actual affair and in the process of her own healing, is strikingly at odds with her earlier self-dependence and active strength, but I will argue on the following pages that the effect of this incongruence is beneficial in terms of the character's appeal.

In contrast to her tomboyish character as a child, Beth's feminine response to her husband (submission, patience, needlework, withdrawal and daydreams, pity and tears) serves to establish the fact that she does possess the attributes of traditional womanhood, and no longer breaks bones when she is angry. This in turn lends substance to her outrage at Daniel's behaviour. Had she responded to her husband's flaws with breaking his bones (as she did during her childhood), many readers of the novel would presumably have been inclined to blame Beth herself for the failure of her marriage, and perhaps even for Daniel's flaws, because the unnaturalness of such a response (of masculine attributes in a grown woman) would have jarred with them. Instead, Grand's positioning of Beth as a passive and gentle victim of her husband's coarser nature is designed to stir a sense of injustice even in traditional readers.

In addition, the comparison between Daniel's and Beth's approach to life results in a revaluation of feminine attributes. Not only is Beth's pity and gentleness compared favourably to Daniel's aggression and selfishness, but traditional feminine attributes are praised and elevated over masculine attributes at other points in *The Beth Book* as well. When Beth says to her childhood friend Samuel Lee: "I'm sorry I said you were a girl. You're much too clumsy",[32] she confidently maintains that the skilfulness girls acquire through their upbringing need not stand back behind masculine attributes. Likewise, Beth's aunt Victoria at one point notes approvingly that Beth "was beginning to form

[31] C. f. BB pp. 469-72.
[32] BB p. 186.

nice feminine habits"[33] and the narrator emphasises that "the more informal but most valuable part of [Beth's] education, which was directed to the strengthening of every womanly attribute, went on steadily".[34]

By contrast, the appeal of traditional masculinity suffers noticeably from being associated with Daniel's vice and cruelty. Masculine scientific interest, for instance, is discredited by Daniel's use of this attribute to justify a vivisection experiment which Beth discovers in mid-process. Without consulting him, she immediately poisons the animal to spare it further pain, and her subsequent discussion with her husband reveals that it was an unnecessary experiment, done mostly to satisfy his natural cruelty.[35] In this situation, Beth's feminine pity causes her to act ethically and with resolution (despite the gothic overtones of the episode, she kills the dog without swooning before or after), while her suggestion that the Old Man's interest in scientific research is nothing but an excuse for men's natural delight in cruelty further biases the reader against traditional masculine attributes.

In a pivotal scene near the end of their marriage, Daniel unsuccessfully tries to exempt himself from all responsibility by saying that such faults as he possesses "are a *man's* faults".[36] This defence is obviously not a valid justification for his faults so much as it is an accusation of the binary code's potential for sanctioning objectively wrong behaviour. It explicitly ties all of Daniel's faults to his traditional mindset, and thereby actually plays into the author's, and not Daniel's hands, by claiming that he is not a corrupted individual who defies society's order, but on the contrary the product of a system which encourages cruel behaviour in men by institutionalising cruelty (in lock hospitals, by the sanctioning of animal experimentation) and by encouraging a feeling

[33] BB p. 209.
[34] BB p. 346.
[35] For an interesting reading of this episode that takes into account the connection drawn between vivisection and the violation of women's bodies under the CD acts, cf. Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, pp. 93-5.
[36] BB p. 522.

of superiority in men, which in combination with traditional feminine submission cannot but corrupt them. By contrast, Beth's traditional feminine attributes, although they cause her unnecessary pain and ultimately only increase Daniel's vices, are elevated at various points during the episode, for instance when she relieves an animal from its suffering, or attempts to adjust her own behaviour according to her husband's wishes. In the end, Beth (and with her, the reader of *The Beth Book*) is forced to acknowledge that even though she has behaved like an exemplary binary woman, Daniel's deterioration cannot be arrested. After three years of marriage during which she has patiently attempted to better him, Beth concludes that he is

> shallow, pretentious, plausible, vulgar-minded, without principle; a man of false pretensions and vain professions; utterly untrustworthy; saying what would suit himself at the moment, or just what occurred to him; not what he thought, but what he imagined he was expected to say.[37]

Although these are very serious allegations, Beth's verdict is protected by her uncharacteristic, traditionally feminine response to Daniel, which makes it very difficult even for a traditional reader to lay the blame for the eventual failure of her marriage on her. Instead, or so Grand suggests, it is Daniel's traditional perception of "manly" rights and privileges that has poisoned his masculinity, and made it necessary for the pure woman to separate from him. The comparison between the corrupted masculinity of the "bully" type of man and the New Woman protagonist's conscientious performance of traditional femininity clearly contradicts the established valuation of the concepts of man and woman by elevating traditionally feminine attributes, and this pattern can also be observed in Olive Schreiner's novel *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...* .

[37] BB pp. 482-3.

From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only..., Olive Schreiner

Olive Schreiner's second and last novel, which was published posthumously in 1926 by her widower Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner, sadly remains unfinished. *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...*, like her first work *The Story of an African Farm*, compares the fate of two protagonists, which is not an unusual feature of New Woman writing.[38] However, the comparison in *From Man to Man* is perhaps the most dramatic of the examples considered in this thesis because it is a very straightforward fictional elaboration of one of the most drastic accusations raised by New Woman fiction, namely, that Victorian marriage law was blurring the line between prostitutes and middle-class wives. *From Man to Man* juxtaposes the degradation of the South African-born sisters Rebekah and Bertie. While Rebekah is married to her brutal and promiscuous cousin Frank, her sister Bertie descends into prostitution after having been abused as a minor. Like many New Women novels, the plot has a limited amount of action and instead focuses on the psychological development of the two sisters; indeed, in Bertie's case, the absence of action and the resulting mental decline are stylistic devices in their own right.

From Man to Man is uncompromising in its condemnation of traditional masculinity. Both the philandering Frank, and the succession of men who abuse or simply fail to help Bertie, are treated with bitter contempt. At the same time, the novel is not devoid of hope: Rebekah, who has several children by her errant husband, devotes herself to educating them carefully after she has given up reforming Frank.

Like *The Beth Book*, *From Man to Man* contains a detailed picture of Rebekah's marriage to a tyrannical husband, whose traditional attitude to women is responsible for

[38] For instance, Ella Hepworth Dixon juxtaposes the friends Mary Erle and Alison Ives in SMW, and Mary Cholmondeley's RP tells the story of the friends Rachel West and Hester Gresley. In addition, the protagonists of HT (Evadne, Edith and Angelica) and the protagonist and her women friends of L.T. Meade's GoP (discussed below) can likewise be interpreted as pursuing different (and complementary) approaches to traditional masculinity and its flaws.

the majority of his flaws. Like Grand, Schreiner draws an explicit comparison between the protagonist's approach to life, and that of her traditional husband. In *From Man to Man*, the points of comparison between Frank and Rebekah are their different attitudes to love, and their different treatment of animals. Even as a child, Rebekah complains about her cousin's visit: "he was so unkind to the cat! He held her up by the tail. I don't like cats . . . but you can't do *that* to them!"[39] Also, whereas Frank only cares for a dog if it is "thoroughbred and wins prizes at shows and hunts well", Rebekah keeps a pet terrier "of no full breed"[40] that sleeps in her bed. Frank's brutal treatment of animals as a boy foreshadows his later attitude to his wife. Because he tires of women very quickly, he is excessively promiscuous. By contrast, several years after her wedding, Rebekah still remembers how irrevocably her love for her husband changed her life. She recounts:

> [a]fter we had been married two days, I knew I had been mistaken in thinking my love for you was not great enough; it rose in me as a wave that swept all, even my old self, away before it.[41]

When Rebekah first notices one of Frank's affairs, with their neighbour Mrs Drummond, her reaction is one of patience, gentleness and motherliness. She later remembers her unusual response in a letter to her husband:

> I told you that if you wanted to see more of her than you could as things were, I would go for a long visit to my mother with the children, and I would ask her to come and keep house for you while I was away.
>
> I would have given you up to her if you had really loved her.[42]

About this letter, Rebekah says "Oh, I know I wrote tenderly, because I never felt so tender for my little baby when it lay sucking at my breast as I felt to you that day".[43] After she has realised that Frank does not wish to marry Mrs Drummond, Rebekah

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[39] Olive Schreiner, *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...* (1926) (London: Virago, 1982), pp. 55-6. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: MtM pp. 55-6.
[40] MtM p. 292.
[41] MtM p. 253.
[42] MtM p. 268, MtM p. 272.
[43] MtM p. 269.

(somewhat perversely) pins her hope on his next conquest, a teenage girl with a "round pimpled face".[44] Rebekah argues later that she was trying desperately to keep "her feeling of honour for the man she has given herself to"[45] by hoping that one woman will eventually awaken Frank's loyalty, but after she has witnessed a string of his affairs, she is forced to realise that he is by nature unable to keep up an interest in any woman. She plunges into a deep depression from which she is eventually cured by buying a small wine garden and caring for the land. This response is characteristic of her, as she comes to explain to Frank in a long letter she writes several years after the one quoted above.

After bearing his escapades in silence and trying, like Beth during the early months of her marriage, to seek the reason for her unhappiness within herself, Rebekah's patience finally gives way when she finds out that Frank has impregnated their native servant. This hurts her so that she renews her attempts to communicate her state of mind, and she writes him a long letter that familiarises the reader with the degradation she has had to endure from the various women Frank has had an affair with over the years. In this letter, she also draws an explicit comparison between her attitude to love, and Frank's:

> we feel so differently with regard to everything in life, is it not also inevitable we should feel differently about love? What if for you a woman is only 'sport'? What if there is something irresistible in your nature which compels you to feel that the woman who has once wholly given herself to you is a dead bird, a fish, through whose gills you have put your fingers? . . . Hasn't it always been so, you never cared for any woman for long?[46]

While Rebekah compares Frank's pursuit of women to his passion for hunting, where the moment of possession inevitably marks the end of his interest in the game, her description of her love for animals, and even of her slow-dying love for her husband,

[44] MtM p. 278.
[45] MtM p. 279.
[46] MtM p. 293.

evoke gardening metaphors. While Frank hunts and possesses,[47] Rebekah, by her own account, nurtures and protects:

> I have understood that what I wanted from living things was what they could give me, not what I could take from them. The supreme moment to me is not when I kill or conquer a living thing, but that moment its eye and mine meet and a line of connection is formed between me and the life that is in it.[48]

Having come to this conclusion, Rebekah graciously offers her husband three possible courses of action: divorce, separation, or reconciliation. Even after years of degradation, she is willing to forgive him and to continue living as his wife. "I had loved so to bear for you and to work for you", she remembers in her letter, and promises: "I will forget the past; never by a word or a sign shall I recall it".[49] Her only stipulation is that Frank must be loyal to her from then on. However, Frank refuses to take her seriously, although he is well aware of the truth of her accusations. When she asks him whether he has read the letter, he instead tries to repress her: "[y]ou've seemed so awfully sensible the last years! I thought you had got over this idiotic tomfoolery".[50] And when she insists, he bursts out: "[y]ou are not fit to be allowed to have children at all if you conduct yourself in this manner! . . . I hope you'll be a little more sensible when I come home, you act like a mad woman now!" and admonishes her to remember her "duty towards the child"[51] she is carrying. In this instance, the reader is well aware that Frank uses the label "mad" simply to silence his wife. His reference to Rebekah's only "failure" as a mother, a miscarriage she had when she discovered her husband secretly vacationing with Mrs Drummond, both exposes Frank as cruel and elevates Rebekah's immediate retreat from their argument for the benefit of her unborn son.

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[47] There is a parallel between Rebekah's assessment of men's and women's different attitudes to love, and that of Lyndall in SAF. Lyndall compares men's love to a child's desire for possessing and maiming a butterfly.
[48] MtM p. 292.
[49] MtM p. 272, MtM p. 289.
[50] MtM p. 249.
[51] MtM p. 250.

Two days later, however, after she has dismissed the pregnant servant, Rebekah calmly but decisively confronts her husband again with a short version of her letter; this time she gives him only two options, divorce or an emotional separation. Frank finally realises that Rebekah is aware of his affair with the servant, and his reaction is characteristically inhuman:

> [w]hatever the girl might do . . . it really did not matter now that Rebekah once knew! At the worst, if she did turn up again, it would only be a matter of a few shillings a week: – a dirty, beastly little nigger! – but perhaps it would never be born? There flashed through his mind the rate of infant mortality among the coloured population which he had seen in some paper: – at the worst that could all be set right with some money.[52]

As in *The Beth Book*, Frank's flaws are recognisably masculine – meaning they are what were assumed to be "a *man's* faults"[53] under the binary code – yet they are aggravated by various circumstances, so much so that far from the code justifying the flaws (as Daniel Maclure had hoped), it is the flaws that challenge the entire code. For instance, *From Man to Man* mentions three of Frank's conquests in detail: a married neighbour, a teenage girl, and a native servant. Perhaps a number of traditional readers would have argued that a husband's infidelity alone is no reason to condemn him (British marriage legislation certainly argued this way until 1923),[54] but the novel's construction attaches a special type of blame to each of Frank's affairs in the form of their marital status, age, or race: Frank's affair with Mrs Drummond is doubly damnable because it damages another man's conjugal rights; on the occasion of his second affair, Rebekah herself registers her disgust with Frank's "terrible sex-desire of a man . . . for a

[52] MtM pp. 307-8.
[53] BB p. 522.
[54] The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 transferred divorce proceedings from Parliament to a civil court of law. This motion made divorce a more realistic option for middle-class couples than it had previously been. However, the act made a crucial difference between male and female claimants, in that it allowed a man to file for divorce if his wife had been unfaithful, whereas a woman had to prove that her husband's adultery was aggravated by incest, desertion, cruelty, rape, sodomy, or bestiality (*Public General Acts, 20 & 21 Victoria I., c. 85*.) This particular imbalance was not addressed until an amendment was passed in 1923 (*Public General Acts, 13 & 14 George V., c. 19*.)

child less than half his age",[55] and while Frank's abuse of the native servant may unfortunately not have caused indignation among some traditional readers, the same readers would – for equally racist reasons – probably have deplored the resulting biracial child.

After Rebekah discovers her husband's affair with the servant, she walls up the door that connects her study with the children's room in the main house, and by extension, her husband. She has a new door made that leads directly into the garden, where a compound is built for the younger children.[56] These changes to the architecture of Frank's house express the rearrangement of her priorities in stone. Exhausted and humiliated from her countless attempts to reach out to him, Rebekah decides to protect her sanity by transferring her energy from the pointless undertaking of reforming her husband to raising his children, for whom there is presumably still hope. This adjustment of her reformatory efforts again contrasts her tendency for long-term nurturing positively with Frank's pattern of hunting, possession and abandonment.

Mothering is rare among New Women protagonists, and guidelines for the careful education of the next generation are rarer still.[57] However, Olive Schreiner seems to develop such guidelines in *From Man to Man*. Rebekah's study is originally "made by cutting off the end of the children's bedroom with a partition . . . where she could always hear the children call if they needed her at night",[58] she adopts her

[55] MtM p. 279.
[56] Cf. MtM p. 411.
[57] There are a number of useful studies on the subject of motherhood and the New Woman – particularly in relation to George Egerton's work. Cf. for instance Nicole M. Fluhr, "Figuring the New Woman: Writers and Mothers in George Egerton's Early Stories", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 43.3 (2001), pp. 243-66. Cf. also Emma Liggins, "'With a Dead Child in her Lap': Bad Mothers and Infant Mortality in George Egerton's Discords", *Literature and History* 9.2 (2000), pp. 17-37.
[58] MtM p. 171. Note that Ann Heilmann argues that this arrangement is detrimental for Rebekah as an artist, as she "is inhibited in her creative output by her maternal and marital responsibilities". Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies*, p. 145. It is true that Rebekah's diary of her intellectual endeavours registers frequent interruptions, but it does so not with anger, but rather with an interest for the difference in direction which these interruptions cause in her line of thought (cf. MtM pp. 177-8.) In addition, it seems that by detailing Rebekah's careful construction of her study room, Schreiner is speculating on how to combine what she perceived as women's various interests. Rebekah's study does not only open to the children's room, but also to the garden, because she loves gardening: "there was a small door...she had

husband's illegitimate daughter Sartje, and attempts to teach her sons her own values – the protection of the weak, amity between the races, and family solidarity – by telling them an allegoric bedtime story. Both the subject matter and the form of presentation are directed at her two oldest sons, especially her second, who had prompted Rebekah's story by refusing to walk with Sartje, his biracial half-sister, because of people's taunts.[59] This second son of Rebekah is not only called after his father, he also looks exactly like him,[60] yet Rebekah's educational endeavours result in a (qualified) success even with Frank junior: she can convince him to walk with his sister "in the pine woods or somewhere where people can't see", at least, while her third son Hugh responds emotionally: "mother . . . *I* will walk with Sartje!"[61] In this episode, Rebekah's mother instinct is contrasted positively with Frank's disinterest in his children.[62]

Even though Rebekah does not physically separate from her husband, her abandonment of the binary man for a better cause can be seen as analogous to Beth's departure from Daniel, in that the marriage episode has served to revalue Rebekah's traditionally feminine attributes against her husband. Accordingly, when she begins to fall in love with Mr Drummond, this change of heart is justified by Frank's debauchery, and mitigated for a traditional reader by the fact that Rebekah is not "mannish" or un-sexed, but rather a good, traditional woman, who is driven to extreme measures by her husband's "manly" flaws. The same explanation is also given in Mona Caird's novel *The Daughters of Danaus* for the protagonist's departure from traditional womanliness.

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had put in that at any time she might run out and work a little in the garden" (MtM p. 171). This turn of phrase does not suggest inhibition to me.

[59] MtM p. 417.

[60] MtM p. 412.

[61] MtM p. 440, MtM p. 439.

[62] By contrast, Mr Drummond, the novel's only positive male character, connects naturally with Rebekah's children (cf. MtM p. 455). Rebekah's father, although not an unsympathetic character, does not "talk much" and is of no help to either Rebekah or her sister. Cf. for instance MtM p. 109.

The Daughters of Danaus, Mona Caird

Mona Caird's 1894 novel *The Daughters of Danaus* is the most popular of her fictional works. The novel is, first and foremost, a study of self-sacrifice, more especially the sacrifice of genius to the demands made on a woman by her family and friends. Hadria Fullerton, the protagonist of *The Daughters of Danaus*, has a gift for music – she plays the piano and composes original "epics and operas"[63] – but during the course of the novel, she is pressured into giving up her talent, and instead dedicates herself to the nursing of her dying mother. The novel's title references the fifty daughters of Danaus of Greek mythology, a reference which finds its echo not only in Hadria's half-imposed marriage, but also in her bitter revulsion at her lot that occasionally inspires her with violent revenge fantasies, as well as in her slow, seemingly eternal struggle against immutable circumstances, which resembles the punishment inflicted on the Danaids.[64]

Like Sarah Grand's Beth Caldwell, who appeared in print three years later, Hadria Fullerton is a headstrong genius who is accustomed to scientific thought processes. Like Angelica of *The Heavenly Twins*, Hadria has enjoyed an uncommonly close relationship with her brothers, who have unlimited respect for her talents, while growing up. Perhaps the novel's especial tragedy lies in the fact that Hadria's advantages in early life have made her extremely clear-sighted, and yet she cannot avoid the pitfalls of the traditional gender roles.

The novel's binary men, in my reading, are Hadria's husband Hubert Temperley and her acquaintance Professor Theobald, with whom she has a short affair towards the end of the novel. The two men are in some respects complementary, and Caird uses

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[63] Mona Caird and Margaret Morganroth Gullette, *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) (New York: Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1993), p. 57. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: DoD p. 57.

[64] According to Greek mythology, the fifty daughters of the Egyptian king Danaus were married against their will and killed their husbands during the wedding night at the command of their father – all except one. Some sources suggest the Greeks believed that they were punished in Tartarus with the task of filling up a bottomless bath tub with sieves for bailers. Cf. Jennifer Clarke Kosak, "Danaids", *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, Michael Gagarin (ed.), 2010.

them to discredit different varieties of traditional masculinity: Hubert holds himself intellectually superior to women and therefore feels entitled to lie to them, whereas Theobald represents a type of binary man whose primary flaw is sexual unrestraint. Both flaws – arrogance and sexual aggression – are intimately connected with the valuation of the concept of man versus that of woman, and like *The Beth Book* and *From Man to Man*, *The Daughters of Danaus* reveals this connection, and in the process revaluates the traditional gender roles.

Like Daniel Maclure, Hadria's future husband Hubert Temperley is quite vocal about his belief in the binary code of the sexes even before he marries Hadria. He believes that the gender roles are ordained by nature, and that opposition to them borders on insanity. Hubert's approach is established in a discussion he leads with Hadria's friend and mentor Valeria Du Prel, who is a rather curious mixture of New and Old Womanhood: although a self-elected spinster, Valeria has failed to carry her convictions into advanced middle age, and loudly and repeatedly regrets the ties that she did not form as a young woman. Notwithstanding her emotional distance from the convictions of her youth, she writes New Women novels, and argues the New Woman standpoint in her discussion with Hubert Temperley, thereby exposing his strictly binary viewpoint. Valeria is an excellent means to reveal the flaws in Hubert's binary approach, because she is both a radical and a traditional. She argues for women's rights to self-determination, yet she is convinced that the best choice in life for a woman is marriage. By locating herself halfway between the binary and the New Woman's convictions, Valeria manages to expose Hubert's position as extreme, despite Hubert's professed dislike of extremism.[65] At their first meeting, she asks him:

> "[y]ou want all women to do exactly the same sort of work, irrespective of their ability or their bent of mind. May I ask why?"

[65] The narrator satirises Temperley by commenting: "[n]ot for worlds would he have harboured an exaggerated or immoderate idea". DoD p. 76.

> "Because I consider that is the kind of work for which they are best fitted . . . after all, *Nature* has something to say in this matter . . . I often think that modern women might take example from these little creatures [birds] . . . *They* never attempt to shirk their lowly tasks on the plea of higher vocations. Not one turns from the path marked out by our great Mother, who also teaches her human children the same lesson of patient duty; but, alas! by them is less faithfully obeyed".[66]

Hubert's arrogant stance on women's position in the world grates on his conversation partner (and the reader) not only on account of its content, but almost equally so because of the suavity of his manner. The narrator explains that Hubert has "a perfect faith in the system which had produced himself",[67] and his arrogance derives directly from his belief in traditional gender roles, and thus becomes associated with traditional masculinity itself.

After Hadria refuses Hubert's proposal of marriage for the first time, he and his sister Henriette devise a plan to exploit Hadria's longing for companionship and her love for music, which is the only thing that binds her to Hubert.[68] Henriette invites Hadria to stay with them and study, assuring her that Hubert has overcome his infatuation, and that the visit would be entirely on friendly grounds, yet when Hubert proposes again a few weeks later, he uses Hadria's acceptance of the invitation to make her believe she has committed herself.

> "I will not listen to denial," he said following her. "I cannot stand a second disappointment. You have allowed me to hope." "How? When? Never!" she exclaimed. "Ah, yes, Hadria. I am older than you and I have more experience. Do you think a man will cease to hope while he continues to see the woman he loves?" Hadria turned very pale. "You seemed to have forgotten – your sister assured me – Ah, it was

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[66] DoD pp. 78-9.
[67] DoD p. 88.
[68] As Ann Heilmann notes, "[t]hough stuck in an unhappy marriage and later, briefly, an ill-advised affair, Hadria suffers most severely and lastingly from the interventions of Old Women". Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies*, p. 219. On this topic see also Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 148. DoD clearly designates Hadria's mother and her sister-in-law as arbiters of patriarchy, but even the New Woman author Valeria Du Prel confuses her own sexual and romantic frustration with a valuable life lesson to bestow on her friend Hadria. In addition, Hadria's older sister Algitha fulfils her dream of a meaningful existence in the East End at Hadria's expense. Following the announcement of Algitha's plan, the narrator explains: "[i]t had always been [Hadria's] function to upset foregone conclusions, overturn orthodox views, and generally disturb the conformity of the family attitude. Now the sedate and established qualities would be expected of her. Hadria must be the stay and hope of the house!" DoD p. 30.

> treacherous, it was cruel. She took advantage of my ignorance, my craving for companionship".[69]

Hubert here confesses to manipulation: he admits that he was aware of the fact that Hadria had no intention to encourage him, but nevertheless considers her to have compromised herself. Since she is still reluctant to agree to his proposal, Hubert, on the advice of his sister, continues his deceit by promising Hadria absolute freedom in their marriage. The reader knows all the while that he has no intention of tolerating any of her "fretful heresies" once he has secured her, but instead firmly expects Hadria's New Woman ideas to wear off under the weight of experiences (by which he chiefly means children) and "the resistless persuasions of our social facts and laws".[70] Moreover, he is convinced that this line of action is in Hadria's best interest, and that he is entitled both to judge what her best interest is, and to force her to comply with his vision. Hadria, on the other hand, repeatedly warns him that her convictions are not fleeting, and that she should not feel herself bound to him by the marital vow if she falls in love with someone else. Whereas Hadria is open about her convictions before marriage because she wants to spare Hubert pain, he lies about his convictions in an attempt to spare himself pain: "[h]ave what ideas you please, only be my wife",[71] he tells her.

If Hubert's arrogance is tempered by the spectacular failure of his theories in his own marriage to Hadria, who does not settle down to her "lowly tasks" even after the birth of two children, the audience is never the wiser. Hubert is less prominent than other binary husbands; after their marriage, there are not many scenes in which the two are directly compared, and it is instead Hubert's sister Henriette and Hadria's own mother who continue to argue the traditional point of view to Hadria. Yet the interweaving of Hubert's masculinity with blackmail, conspiracy, exploitation and dishonesty during the courtship undermines his respectable exterior, and discredits

[69] DoD p. 140.
[70] DoD p. 135.
[71] DoD p. 143.

binary masculinity.[72] When Hadria sums up her engagement and early marriage to Henriette, she points out that it is precisely because of his traditional attitude that Hubert acted wrongly:

> I believe that Hubert has acted conscientiously, according to his standard. But I detest his standard. He did not think it wrong or treacherous to behave as he did towards me. But it is *that very fact* that I so bitterly resent. I could have forgiven him a sin against myself alone, which he acknowledged to be a sin. But this is a sin against my entire sex, which he does *not* acknowledge to be a sin. It is the insolence that is implied in supposing it allowable for a man to trick a woman in that way, without the smallest damage to his self-respect, that sticks so in my throat. What does it imply as regards his attitude towards all women? Ah! it is *that* which makes me feel so rancorous. And I resent Hubert's calm assumption that he had a right to judge what was best for me, and even to force me, by fraud, into following his view . . . I deny that I owe allegiance to a man who so treated me.[73]

Like *The Beth Book*, *The Daughters of Danaus* certainly denies that Hadria owes any allegiance to her husband, and it is specifically the depiction of the binary man's tyranny, and the protagonist's feminine suffering and self-sacrifice, which lend weight to this claim. Like Beth, Hadria is a headstrong young woman for whom the marital episode represents a stark break in character. Her attitude to traditionally-minded men, and to the self-sacrifice demanded of women under the binary code, is fixed at an early age and remains always the same – she is against it – and yet it is her own frustrating and pointless sacrifice to a traditional man that lends substance to this message. By

[72] Please note that my reading of this character is substantially more condemnatory than that of Stephanie Forward, who concludes that "Hubert is not depicted as evil; on the contrary he is a decent family man. His very ordinariness actually heightens the sense of tragedy rather than detracting from it". Stephanie Forward, "The 'New Man' in *Fin-de-Siècle* Fiction", *Women's Writing* 5.3 (1998), pp. 437-55: p. 450. I disagree with this view for the reasons stated above. Angelique Richardson similarly argues against reading Hubert as an overly villainous character by suggesting that "[i]n her fiction Caird adheres to homoeopathic principle", a principle which Richardson contrasts with Sarah Grand's method of arousing the reader "through exaggeration and shock tactics". Richardson argues that this different approach of Caird and Grand also influences the depiction of male characters and claims that Caird's men are not as drastically corrupted as Grand's. In: Angelique Richardson, "Allopathic Pills? Health, Fitness and New Woman Fictions", *Women: A Cultural Review* 10.1 (1999), pp. 1-21: p. 18. Ann Heilmann is more critical of the character, arguing that "while Caird never explicitly refers to marital rape, Hadria's disgust with the 'humiliating, the degrading, the contemptible' side of marriage is so pronounced (at one point the wedding night is compared to ritual human slaughter) that consensual sexual relations seem out of the question". Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 147. It is certainly true that Hubert is neither diseased nor overseeing a lock hospital; nevertheless, I think the comparatively positive assessment of his character in modern criticism is perhaps an effect of reading DoD in conjunction with WoA's Philip Dendraith. Hubert's cruelty is of course rather unspectacular in comparison; nonetheless it is there.

[73] DoD pp. 348-50.

having her protagonist comply with binary demands, and by depicting afterwards how little joy Hadria actually brings to anyone through her sacrifice, Mona Caird manages to raise the question of the purpose of women's self-sacrifice more pointedly than if she had left it to be discussed entirely in the abstract, as happens frequently during the novel.

> "Vicarious sacrifice!" [Professor Fortescue] exclaimed, with a sudden outbreak of the scorn and impatience that Hadria had seen in him on one other occasion, "I never heard a doctrine more insane, more immoral, or more suicidal!"[74]

This is of course the very sentiment which *The Daughters of Danaus* attempts to plant in the hearts and minds of its readers. Because of her depiction of traditional masculinity as irrevocably flawed, Mona Caird, like Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner, succeeds in creating a protagonist whose (intermittent) failure to rebel, and not her desire to rebel, causes moral outrage. Through her experiences in marriage, Hadria herself becomes what she had sought desperately, and in vain, among the many women who share her fate: a woman who refuses to go into the sacrifice blindfolded, a conscious victim that sees, understands, and "hate[s]".[75] It is her marriage to Hubert which allows her to argue from the "inside" – not from the sidelines of spectators watching the procession of girl sacrifices that Hadria evokes so poignantly in a discussion with her sister Algitha – but from among the throng of victims, like them in her sacrifice, but unlike them in her awareness of the immorality of the procession.[76]

At the same time, the fact that Hadria's sacrifice remains entirely without benefit for the people who exact it further connects Caird's depiction of the binary gender roles to that of *The Beth Book* and *From Man to Man*. Just as Daniel Maclure does not profit

[74] DoD p. 103.
[75] DoD p. 169.
[76] Casey Althea Cothran has likewise noted that "while this novel is certainly about the thwarted potential of the 'extraordinary' individual, it is also about this individual's immense capacity for self-denial . . . Because of their needless suffering, women serve as signifiers of cultural distress and as possessors of knowledge. They thus have the power to place blame and to exercise scorn". Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire", p. 151.

from his wife's submission, Hadria's listless performance of her duties as mother and daughter satisfies neither her mother nor her husband. Worse, Caird suggests that forcing Hadria to abandon her musical career actually drives her to have an affair with her acquaintance Professor Theobald. The connection between Hadria's sacrifice and her extra-marital affair is strengthened by the fact that she is actually repulsed by her lover from the beginning, for his attitude to women is, if anything, more degrading than Hubert's. Yet she accepts him for a short while only to fill the void of her ambition, which has been opened up by her conscientious performance of traditional femininity.

The character of Professor Theobald shows distinct parallels to Dunlop Strange of *The Story of a Modern Woman* and to Sir Mosley Menteith in *The Heavenly Twins*. All three have seduced and abandoned lower class girls in the past, but have escaped judgement, and in each case, the protagonist's interaction with her lover's ex-mistress catalyses a dramatic change in the novel's plot. Also, the protagonist's treatment of her lower class "sister" is revaluated against the binary man's aggressive sexuality and lack of morality. Hadria (unwittingly) adopts the professor's daughter Martha after her mother's death with the intention of raising her as a New Woman,[77] whereas he never shows any interest in the girl until she becomes of use to him: in retaliation for Hadria's emotional detachment, he decides to take the child away from her in order to raise Martha as an Old Woman. He taunts:

> I think you have some special views on the education of the little one which I cannot entirely approve. After all, a woman has probably to be a wife and mother, on the good old terms that have served the world for a fair number of centuries, when one comes to consider it: it is a pity to

[77] Hadria's adoption of Martha proves that she naturally tends towards mothering, which counteracts the potentially negative effect of her lack of motherliness towards her own children. Loralee MacPike argues that "Hadria proves that she is capable of heterosexuality, reproduction, and mothering; she fulfils all the traditional expectations well, although in highly unorthodox ways". Loralee MacPike, "The New Woman, Childbearing, and the Reconstruction of Gender, 1880-1900", *NWSA Journal* 1.3 (1989), pp. 368-97: p. 385. On the other hand, Ann Heilmann draws attention to the fact that Hadria's mothering of Martha is inefficient and motivated by selfishness, and insofar mirrors Hadria's "own betrayal by her older friend and adoptive mother, Valeria du Prel". Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 148. In addition, Hadria anticlimactically gives Martha up without a struggle when her father Professor Theobald asserts his rights.

> allow her to grow up without those dogmas and sentiments that may help to make the position tolerable, if not always satisfactory, to her.[78]

Within the plot, the Old Man thus triumphs over the New Woman of the present (Hadria) and the future (Martha), as he had triumphed over Martha's mother, Ellen Jervis, in the past. But on a meta-textual level, the fact that Hadria must part with her "daughter" Martha again exemplifies the degree of cruelty that traditional men are capable of. Ann Heilmann emphasises this exact point when she argues that

> [b]y deploying calculated shock tactics, [Caird] hoped to rouse [her] readers into indignation over the wrongs women suffered so that they would become more sympathetic to the demands of feminists.[79]

In addition to the shocking effect of Professor Theobald's heartless insistence on his rights as a man, I would argue that it is especially Hadria's complementary, passive reaction to this injustice which helps to "rouse" Caird's readers. The comparison of Theobald's flawed binary masculinity with Hadria's superior feminine attributes, and the emphasis on her pointless sacrifice, justify the New Woman's contempt of the binary code in general, and binary men in particular.[80] This direct comparison between the flawed binary man and the womanly protagonist also characterises Mary Cholmondeley's most famous novel, *Red Pottage*.

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[78] DoD p. 439.

[79] Ann Heilmann, "Mrs Grundy's Rebellion: Margaret Oliphant between Orthodoxy and the New Woman", *Women's Writing* 6.2 (1999), pp. 215-37: p. 228. Note that Heilmann's interpretation is at odds with Angelique Richardson's notion of Caird's "homeopathic principle" (cf. Richardson, "Allopathic Pills?": esp. p. 18.).

[80] Several critics have interpreted the novel's ending more pessimistically than this. Cf. for instance Patricia Murphy: "[i]f not condemned to death, sexualized New Women frequently were destined for lives of misery, as was … Mona Caird's Hadria Fullerton, who watched ineffectually as her adopted daughter was wrested from her". Patricia Murphy, "Disdained and Disempowered: The 'Inverted' New Woman in Rhoda Broughton's Dear Faustina", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 19.1 (2000), pp. 57-79: p. 61. While this is of course a factually accurate account of DoD's plot, my reading differs in that I perceive Hadria's loss of her adoptive daughter to serve a positive function within the framework of the novel, i.e., that of condemning binary masculinity, which in turn urges the necessity of a revolution of the gender roles outside the confines of fiction.

Red Pottage, Mary Cholmondeley

Red Pottage was published in 1899 as Mary Cholmondeley's seventh novel. It was a great success in England and America and went through several editions in the first year. Like many New Women novels, *Red Pottage* has two protagonists whose destinies are interwoven. Rachel West and Hester Gresley meet as children, and their friendship survives various changes of fortune: after a gilded youth, the bankruptcy of Rachel's family forces her to live in poverty and she is abandoned by her lover, while Hester simultaneously debuts under the guardianship of her aunt and publishes her first novel. A twist of fortune then restores Rachel's wealth and she falls in love again, while Hester withdraws to the countryside after her aunt's death to write her second novel, but is hampered and sabotaged by her traditionally-minded brother at every turn. It is this latter episode which I will examine here.

In contradistinction to the protagonists examined above, Hester's oppressor is not her husband, but her brother. Although the fact that Hester does not have a sexual relationship with the traditional man simplifies her emotional response to him (in part because the degradation and the risk of contamination that so many New Woman protagonists thematised is no part of Hester's horizon of experience), the depiction of Hester's interactions with her brother are similar to those interactions between the protagonist and the Old Man examined in the episodes above, in that the comparison of Hester's to James' attributes and behavioural patterns serves to devalue traditional masculinity.

The character of James Gresley shows many similarities to the male characters discussed so far. As Hester's only living male relative, he has a certain amount of legal authority over her, although she is twenty-eight when she moves in with him, and a published author. As a priest, James also occupies (and abuses) a position of authority

in society. Like Daniel Maclure, he is superficially good-looking, but the narrator observes that

> a second closer glance was discouraging. Mr. Gresley's suspicious eye and thin compressed lips hinted that both fanatic and saint were fighting for predominance in the kingdom of that pinched brain, the narrowness of which the sloping forehead betokened with such cruel plainness.[81]

James' traditional mindset reveals itself in "trivial matters".[82] For example, he insists on controlling the communication of the female members of his household. At the beginning of Hester's stay at her brother's vicarage at Warpington, Hester opens the letter bag to extract her own letters, but is immediately called to order because the ritual of opening the letter bag and dispersing the contents is reserved for James.[83] Another time, Hester peruses the daily paper after its arrival in the afternoon, knowing that James will not need it before the evening. In this instance, it is her sister-in-law who objects:

> "My dear Hester," Mrs. Gresley said, really scandalized, "I am sure you won't mind my saying so, but James has not seen his paper yet." "I have noticed he never by any chance looks at it till the evening, and you always say you never read it," said Hester, deep in a political crisis. "That is his rule, and a very good rule it is, but he naturally likes to be the *first* to look at it," said Mrs. Gresley with a great exercise of patience. She had heard Hester was clever, but she found her very stupid. Everything had to be explained to her.[84]

Hester is aware of the fact that she annoys her brother and his wife Minna, and tries to give as little offence as possible. She does not rebel against James' house rules, but instead attempts to adapt to them. Although the narrator's trenchant commentary partly undermines Hester's demure attitude, her desire to maintain harmony at the cost of her

[81] RP p. 37.
[82] RP p. 39.
[83] Control over the communication of the female members of a family is used in several New Women novels to alert readers to the tyrannical nature of the Old Man. For instance, in HT, Mr Frayling tries to prohibit his wife's communication with her daughter Evadne, while in BB Daniel Maclure opens Beth's letters despite her express wish. Frank's refusal to read Rebekah's letter in MtM reverses the situation, but still denies the protagonist a right to have her own communications taken seriously. Conversely, male characters who do not have a traditional view of the sexes are often very careful with the protagonist's communications: Gregory Rose of SAF carries Lyndall's short note in his breast pocket after her death, and Dr Cornerstone of ASW is the attentive addressee of Jessamine Halliday's early attempts at explaining her own nature in writing.
[84] RP pp. 38-9.

own convictions elevates her feminine acquiescence over James' merciless stance on opposition. The narrator comments:

> It was fortunate for [Hester] that she was quick-witted . . . She grasped the principle that those who have a great love of power and little scope for it must necessarily exercise it in trivial matters. She extended the principle of the newspaper and the letter-bag over her entire intercourse with the Gresleys, and never offended in that manner again.[85]

Hester routinely tries to curb her own convictions to please James and Minna, and often resolves to play the part that her brother wants her to play in his household:

> Mr. Gresley liked Hester immensely when she had freshly ironed herself flat under one of these resolutions. He was wont to say that no one was pleasanter than Hester when she was reasonable, or made more suitable remarks.[86]

In addition, Hester demurely accepts the fact that she is given only a tiny attic to lodge in, "where the cold of winter and the heat of summer"[87] are alternately challenging the completion of her second novel. She uses the quiet night hours for most of her work, to avoid giving offence to her brother and disrupting his plan for the day. James is entirely unaware that his sister is a promising young author at the time she moves into the vicarage, and instead of taking her individual accomplishments into account, he treats her as a stereotypical binary woman.

> Hester was quite accustomed, when her help was asked as to a composition, to receive as a reason for the request the extremely gratifying assurance that she was "good" at punctuation and spelling. It gave the would-be author a comfortable feeling that after all he was only asking advice on the crudest technical matters on which Hester's superiority could be admitted without a loss of masculine self-respect.[88]

By asking Hester to check only his spelling, James attempts to ensure that she does not feel superior to him. Although Hester toys with the idea of making her brother admit the real reason behind his request for help, namely her literary talent, she quickly abandons

[85] RP p. 39.
[86] RP p. 42.
[87] RP p. 169.
[88] RP p. 39.

the design and accepts his veiled request for spelling assistance instead, thereby protecting his self-esteem.

In addition to his arrogance and his wish to control Hester, James' main flaw is his astonishing asininity. He is slow to grasp developments and causal relationships, but convinced of his superiority because, as the narrator points out, he has surrounded himself with inferiors. During one of his characteristic delusions of grandeur, James destroys the only copy of the book Hester has written during her stay at the vicarage, because he thinks the book is too immoral to be printed.[89] His blind adherence to the stereotype of the passive, chaste and self-effacing woman prevents him from perceiving literary merit in what he considers to be the treatment of immoral subject matter. However, James' opinion of Hester's literary talents stands in stark contradiction to that of a good many literary critics who had praised her first novel precisely because she chose not to omit "immoral" subjects. His binary attitude makes him ridiculous and dangerous at the same time: like Hubert Temperley in *The Daughters of Danaus*, James assumes the right to choose for the protagonist, and is not above underhand actions to achieve his goal.

James' inability to perceive value in his sister's novel stems largely from the fact that Hester has written an emotional book which he is incapable of understanding,[90] whereas his own literary creations are tortuously intellectual. In *Red Pottage*, cold intellectuality is devalued, because it is represented by James Gresley, whereas Hester's particular blend of emotional intellectually produces a sought-after piece of writing. This comparison revisits one of the attribute pairs addressed in the introduction to this

[89] Because the novel implies that the reader's criticism of James Gresley mirrors the criticism which was raised in Hester's second (burnt) novel, the reader of RP actually receives the same "immoral" message about bigoted and fanatical church representatives that James wanted to destroy, through James himself. It is his act of burning the fictional novel that confirms the validity of the accusations raised in Mary Cholmondeley's novel.

[90] The narrator explains that "[a]ll the love which could not be covered by his own mild courtship of the obviously grateful Mrs Gresley, Mr Gresley put down as exaggerated". RP p. 167.

thesis: emotionality and intellectuality. Contrary to the traditional view of the relative merit of these two (arbitrary) opposites, *Red Pottage* convincingly argues that Hester's combination of emotionality and intellectuality is by far superior to James' pure intellectuality, both as a character attribute and as a catalyst of literary texts.

As in *The Daughters of Danaus*, it is not the comparison of James with other, more positive male characters which devalues his traditional masculinity so much as the comparison of his attitude to that of Hester. Although as a priest James is contrasted to the bishop of his diocese, whose infinite patience and tolerance[91] exposes the fanatical undercurrent of James' thoughts, it is Hester's feminine approach to religion which most effectively highlights his deficiencies as a priest. Instead of attending her brother's services, Hester prefers to worship quietly in the garden after her exhausting nights of writing. When he berates her for not attending church sermons, the narrator explains that Hester

> stifled many fierce and cruel impulses to speak as plainly as he did, to tell him that it was not religion that was abhorrent to her, but the form in which he presented it to her . . . She laid down many weapons before she trusted herself to speak.[92]

In the end, she chooses to thank James "gently" for the good intentions which prompted his reproach. While Hester refuses to hurt her brother even at the price of denying her own convictions, James' reaction further devalues his traditional beliefs by associating him with the fanaticism that sparked witch hunts during the Renaissance. The above discussion of Hester's faith ends with the following sentence:

> [t]he sun had vanquished the mist, and in the brilliant light the two figures moved silently side by side back to the house, one with something

[91] The gendering of these attributes is not as clear as that of many others. Although ostensibly female, they are also explicitly Christian virtues, and as such never fully left the domain of (clergy)men. RP raises the question of the likeness between clergymen and women in unflattering terms elsewhere (RP p. 58) but in this case, the bishop's patience, like Hester's, contrasts favourably with James' impatience, and the attribute is therefore elevated. On the re-association of feminine attributes by men cf. also the second chapter of this thesis, as well as Jennifer Beauvais' thesis on the figure of the bachelor in nineteenth-century fiction: Jennifer Beauvais, "Between the Spheres: Male Characters and the Performance of Femininity in Four Victorian Novels, 1849-1886", Ph.D., Université de Montreal, 2009.

[92] RP p. 105.

> very like rage in his heart, the rage that in bygone days found expression in stake and faggot.[93]

The Old Man's arrogance, and his resulting assumption that judging for the protagonist is perfectly admissible behaviour, is criticised in *Red Pottage* as it is in *The Daughters of Danaus*. James' sense of entitlement, like that of Hubert Temperley, stems directly from his binary approach to his sister. It is not an individual character flaw so much as the expression of the outlook of a certain type of man who was consistently criticised in New Woman writing.

The most explicit condemnation of James' masculine arrogance is the novel's comparison between the siblings' treatments of each other's "children". When James' son Reginald falls dangerously ill, Hester, in whose arms the child falls asleep, sits perfectly still for an entire night. She suffers immense physical agony, but succeeds in saving the child. James, in his turn, actively burns Hester's "child", her second novel, when it accidentally falls into his hands. Hester accuses him: "I did what I could. I did not let your child die. Why have you killed mine?"[94] It is the comparison between James' and Hester's sex-specific attributes that answers this question for the reader, and in so doing discredits binary masculinity. Hester saves James' child because she is capable of self-sacrifice and empathy. James kills Hester's child because his assumed superiority deludes him into thinking himself capable to judge the merit of her novel, and because his cold intellectuality prevents him from empathising with her or anyone else. As in the novels examined above, the direct comparison of Hester and James not only devalues traditional masculinity, but also serves to justify Hester's departure from her tyrannical brother: when the epilogue reveals that she follows Rachel to India after the events of the novel, presumably never to see her brother again, a good part of Mary Cholmondeley's readership probably felt relieved.

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[93] RP p. 105.
[94] RP p. 179.

The Main Findings of the First Chapter

Although they stem from very different novels, the male characters examined in this chapter exhibit striking similarities. Daniel, Frank, Hubert and James all possess a degree of power over the protagonist, and they all abuse this power, because their masculinity is tainted by an uncommon degree of cruelty, idiocy, or moral corruption. Although they appear to be wholesome individuals, and even to some degree pillars of their society,[95] the comparison of these characters with the New Woman protagonists reveals not only that these male characters are deeply flawed, but also that their flaws are a direct effect of their belief in the traditional valuation of the gender roles. In my view, this specific way of characterising Old Men has a number of positive effects for the New Woman author who employs it.

Firstly, the construction of the male characters in the above novels in each case serves the purpose of justifying the protagonist's departure from traditional relationship patterns. Beth separates from her husband to become a platform speaker and she has an affair. Rebekah separates mentally from her husband and devotes her time to the children and her intellectual advancement, and she too meets another man. Hadria abandons her family for Paris, and after her grudging return has an affair as well. Hester leaves her brother's tutelage for India with her best friend Rachel – the reader assumes she will become a successful writer and a self-supporting spinster. In each case, the protagonist radically departs from the behavioural patterns laid out for women by the binary code of the sexes. They violate notions of feminine purity, and of the necessity for women to stay in their sphere, as well as the doctrine of women's helplessness and dependence. But in each case, the spectacle of the binary man serves to mitigate the protagonist's rebellion. Beth leaves Daniel because his vice corrupts her, Rebekah

[95] They appear so not least because of their professions: Daniel is a doctor, Hubert is a lawyer, and James is a priest.

focuses on her children because of Frank's unfaithfulness, Hadria absconds to Paris because Hubert blackmailed her into marriage and arrogantly insists on his right to decide for her, and Hester flees to India because her brother has killed her "child", her second novel. In each case, the period in the protagonist's life which might be termed the revaluation episode serves to justify her departure from the binary man, and with that her departure from traditional relationship patterns.

The second effect of this depiction of traditional masculinity as irrevocably flawed is the revaluation of a number of feminine attributes which the protagonist displays, sometimes quite atypically, during her period of subjugation to an individual binary man. For instance, in Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, Beth Caldwell's sudden display of feminine attributes is quite incongruous with Grand's characterisation of Beth as a child, yet her "feminine" approach to animal testing, to marital fidelity, and to lock hospitals is presented as superior to Daniel's "manly" approach. In Olive Schreiner's *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...*, Rebekah's instinct to nurture and to protect is contrasted with Frank's hunting instinct, which determines his treatment of animals and women. In Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*, Hadria's sacrifice is contrasted with her husband's selfish enforcement of that sacrifice; in addition, her approach to a fallen woman compares positively to Professor Theobald's. The comparison of Hester's emotional and James's intellectual approach to each other's "children" in Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* reveals the hollowness of James' Christianity, and the degree of his delusion of grandeur.[96] Accordingly, the novels considered in this chapter all elevate feminine attributes over masculine ones by comparing and contrasting traditionally masculine with traditionally feminine responses.

[96] There are countless other examples of a direct contrast between masculine and feminine approaches in New Woman fiction. For instance, in HT, Mrs Frayling's method of preventing a scandal over Evadne's marriage is elevated over that of her husband. In SMW, Alison Ives' nurturing approach to women of the lower classes contrasts markedly with Dunlop Strange's, and in ASW, Lord Heriot's disgust at having disabled children compares negatively to Jessamine's feeling of duty and guilt. In WoA, Philip Dendraith tortures the dog that Viola Sedley protects. Cf. WoA p. 46.

Furthermore, these episodes of subjugation serve to establish the fact that the protagonist is not "mannish" or "de-sexed", as her critics would argue, but rather a good, traditional woman who is forced to rebel against the traditional man in order to *remain* a good traditional woman. This seems to be a paradoxical claim, especially since many of the protagonists examined above are decidedly unfeminine during their childhood years, and continue to display new (that is, masculine) attributes after their separation from their husbands. In addition, New Woman literature is not remembered predominantly for its celebration of traditional womanliness, although its tendency to do so has been noted before.[97] Nevertheless, I hold that the construction of binary male characters, and their pairing with New Women protagonists in revaluation episodes, serves to establish a protective "shield" of womanliness around the protagonist's otherwise disconcertingly new personality. For instance, in Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, Beth's behaviour during the marriage episode establishes her as the very model of traditional womanhood. After suffering for an extended period of time, readers are forced to conclude that Beth leaves her husband not because of her rebellious new nature, but rather because she wants to protect her traditional feminine attributes.[98] To this extent, the depiction of the binary man can be interpreted as a protective strategy on the part of New Women writers. As Kristin Ross has pointed out,

> New Woman writers needed to adjust their works to be favourably received. They found themselves in the precarious position of, on the one hand, writing New Women as championing feminist causes and, on the other, attempting to make unruly heroines palatable to conservative audiences.[99]

[97] For instance by Ann Heilmann, in a chapter entitled "Seduction Stories". Cf. Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, pp. 30-4.
[98] Beth is concerned mainly about losing her purity and her innocence through contact with her husband. She refers to "the inevitable degradation of intimate association with such a man as her husband". BB p. 454.
[99] Kristin C. Ross, "Preparing the Girl for the 'Fight of Life': Female Education and the New Woman in Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman*", *Women's Writing* 19.1 (2012), pp. 76-95: p. 76.

In my view, the process of making a protagonist "palatable" is aided considerably by the construction of the binary man and the revaluation episode.[100] The femininity that Beth acquires during her time with Daniel is a layer which arguably needed to be superimposed on her rather tomboyish childhood character to make her acceptable to a wider audience, especially with a view to justifying Beth's later forays into independence. This view goes some way towards explaining why self-sacrifice, although officially reviled by many New Women authors, is actually omnipresent in New Woman fiction. For instance, after her separation from Daniel and the sacrifice connected with that relationship, Beth actually uses her newly won freedom to nurse the painter Arthur Brock until she is on the brink of starvation.

The surprising discrepancy between the theoretical ideas of many New Women protagonists (which clearly condemn self-sacrifice) and their actions in the plot[101] has occurred to a number of critics.[102] Likewise, the seeming interruption of the protagonist's development from a New Girl to a New Woman by the revaluation episode, during which the protagonist acts atypically and inconsistently with her former and future self, has attracted negative criticism. Gail Cunningham, for instance, pointed

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[100] Ann Ardis has expressed a similar thought, cf. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, p. 68.

[101] The list of New Women protagonists who sacrifice something of themselves for the benefit of others is long. I give only a few examples here: Hadria (DoD) abandons her true vocation to nurse her mother, Rebekah (MtM) sacrifices her desire for a true marriage to her obligations towards her children and her husband's illegitimate child, Bet Granger (GoP) agrees to marrying a man she hates to save her brothers, Evadne Frayling (HT) sacrifices her sanity to minimise the damage of reputation that threatens her family because she refuses to consummate her marriage, Camilla Braeburn (of Arabella Kenealy's *The Marriage Yoke*) and Jessamine Halliday (ASW) sacrifice love and health to convention, Priscilla Momerie (YLHE) sacrifices her entire life (the "years" in the title) to support her husband, Mary Crookenden of Lucas Malet's (Mary St Leger Kingsley's) *The Wages of Sin* sacrifices her pride, Mary Desmond (WoG) spends all her money on her gambling husband, Mary Erle (SMW) sacrifices her last chance of happiness to protect her rival, Anne Brown (MB) sacrifices her freedom and her health to save a degenerate man, and Cecily Kingslake of Netta Syrett's *A Day's Journey* sacrifices her chances of becoming a celebrated author to spare her husband from professional jealousy.

[102] Marilyn Bonnell, for instance, points out that after proposing an end of female self-sacrifice Evadne Frayling of HT "does indeed sacrifice herself, until in the end she is freed by her husband's death". Marilyn Bonnell, "The Legacy of Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*: A Review Essay", *English Language in Transition 1880-1920* 36.4 (1993), pp. 467-78: p. 471. Angelique Richardson has likewise cautioned in 1999 that "Elaine Showalter's argument that New Women novels are characterized by the rejection of self-sacrifice requires amendment. Women were not to sacrifice themselves to unsuitable men, but to the community at large". Angelique Richardson, "The Eugenization of Love: Sarah Grand and the Morality of Genealogy", *Victorian Studies* 42.2 (1999), pp. 227-55: p. 230.

out as early as 1978 that in many cases the protagonist of New Woman fiction "suddenly and almost inexplicably marries the wrong man".[103] However, in my reading, both of these recurring structural oddities of New Woman fiction take their beginning in the author's desire to make her protagonist "palatable", and serve to renegotiate the valuation of the binary concepts man and woman.

Among the multitude of novels from the New Woman period, there are of course many which do not contain a revaluation episode similar to the ones examined above, even if they contain characters that I identify as binary. Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* is a case in point. I will take a very brief look here at this novel, because I would like to suggest that its structural difference actually supports my interpretation of the function of the New Woman's self-sacrifice to the Old Man.

In Olive Schreiner's early New Woman novel *The Story of an African Farm*,[104] the protagonist Lyndall refuses to sacrifice herself in the way that the protagonists examined above have opted to do. Instead of marrying the father of her child – to whom she is but momentarily attracted – she chooses to enter a free union with him, with the explicit aim of eluding suffering:

> if I had been married to you for a year, I should have come to my senses, and seen that your hands and your voice are like the hands and the voice of any other man. I cannot quite see that now. But it is all madness. You call into activity one part of my nature; there is a higher part that you know nothing of, that you never touch. If I married you, afterwards it would arise and assert itself, and I should hate you always, as I do now sometimes.[105]

Lyndall's insight into the mechanics of a marriage between a New Woman and an Old Man is not unique among New Women protagonists. Hadria Fullerton expresses the same feelings when Hubert Temperley proposes to her in *The Daughters of Danaus*.

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[103] Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978), p. 106.

[104] The novel was published in 1883, eleven years before the year that Lynn Pykett refers to as the "annus mirabilis" of New Woman fiction. Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine*, p. 137.

[105] Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 204. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: SAF p. 204.

Beth Caldwell, Anne Brown, Mary Erle, Jessamine Halliday, Viola Sedley and Mary Desmond[106] are all well aware of the nature and the shortcomings of their binary fiancés, but consent to marriage for one reason or another. While this decision does not benefit the protagonists in the short run, their willingness to attempt a union along the old lines of the binary code, and the subsequent, honest failure to maintain the marriage and to save the Old Man from degradation, in each case establishes the protagonist in the estimation of the novel's audience. A. R. Cunningham, conjecturing about Hadria Fullerton's sudden and inexplicable marriage, has made the apt remark that "the [New Woman] novel *must* have a marriage to discuss",[107] and indeed many New Women novels give the impression that the revaluation episode is inserted chiefly in order to discuss traditional marriage, and to give the audience a chance to side with the protagonist against the cruel binary man.

By contrast, one might argue that Schreiner's protagonist in *The Story of an African Farm* fails to connect to the audience to the same degree, at least after her return from school. Whereas her passionate reaction to Bonaparte Blenkins in the first half of the novel (in other words, her suffering under an Old Man) had made the reader sympathise with her during her childhood, Lyndall is surprisingly aloof after her absence at school. In contrast to her childhood disposition to help and protect others, she later pursues her own goals ruthlessly and without consideration for the people around her, and, for the first time, the reader is more likely to sympathise with the traditional, passive Em, whose lover Lyndall abstracts to no purpose.[108]

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[106] These are the protagonists of BB, MB, SMW, ASW, WoA, WoG, in order.
[107] Cunningham, "New Woman Fiction": p. 183, emphasis added.
[108] Lyndall "returns" Gregory to Em by her deathbed request. Curiously, SAF contains another instance of meddling with another person's marital prospect from beyond the grave. In the chapter "Tant' Sannie holds an Upsitting, and Gregory writes a Letter" (SAF Ch. 5, pp. 166-74) exactly such a fate befalls the farmer Piet, who would much rather marry his deceased wife's sister than Tant' Sannie, but obeys his wife's selfish death wishes. In this instance, locking people into loveless marriages is criticised by the narrator, yet Lyndall's request to Gregory is analogous, for both Gregory and Em have made it quite clear that they do not love each other any longer at the time they marry.

This change in Lyndall's behaviour has not gone unnoticed in criticism. Kheagan Kane Turner, for instance, has wondered why "Lyndall's powers inexplicably disappear when she reaches womanhood",[109] while Francesca Mallory McNease goes so far as to say that Lyndall's actions after her return from school are "parasitic".[110] In my view, these responses are determined to some degree by an unconscious adherence to the patterns of the binary code, and also by a horizon of expectation that critics retrospectively create from the perusal of a great number of New Women novels. For what Lyndall really does, contrary to most protagonists of New Woman fiction, is live by her word. She is convinced that marriage to an Old Man would be fatal, and she stands by this judgement, whereas in the novels examined above, even if the protagonist knows as well as Lyndall does that marrying a traditional man will be fatal to her happiness, she yet gives readers a chance to conclude as much for themselves. If Lyndall, like the protagonists created by other New Women authors and like Schreiner's later creations,[111] had suffered under a traditional husband, we can conjecture that her appeal would have benefitted from it: for one thing, her renunciation of traditional masculinity would have been underpinned by her actual experiences (as it was in her rebellion against Bonaparte), and, for another, displaying a few recognisably feminine attributes would have endeared her further to the majority of her audience. By contrast, Lyndall's unapologetic rejection of the binary man makes her one of the most radical New Women protagonists of the entire period, and her unapologetically masculine pride and self-reliance – she dies looking into her own eyes for support – has elicited mixed reactions among the novel's readers. These reactions can perhaps be explained by Olive Schreiner's refusal to bow before what would become a convention of the genre, and,

[109] Turner, "In Perfect Sympathy", p. 60.
[110] Francesca Mallory McNease, "The New Woman as Bifurcated Female in *Jude the Obscure*, *The Story of an African Farm*, *The Odd Women*, and *Ann Veronica*", Ph.D., Oklahoma State University, 1994, p. 78.
[111] Olive Schreiner's later novel *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...* focuses on a marriage episode in its portrait of Rebekah's marriage to Frank.

conversely, the tendency of other New Women authors to emphasise self-sacrifice (and other recognisably feminine attributes) in the characterisation of their protagonists can perhaps be traced back to the alienation which many readers have felt from Lyndall during the latter half of *The Story of an African Farm*. By deduction, the revaluation episode, although seemingly incongruent with the protagonist's character and development, actually seems to serve the important function of anchoring the protagonist's New Womanhood in traditional femininity – by stressing her willingness to self-sacrifice.

A similar point can be made by the example of Emma Frances Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman.* In this novel, Jessamine Halliday, who has been raised as a traditional woman yet rebels against her lot, absconds to Scotland instead of accepting the proposal of the eligible but diseased Lord Heriot. She then meets and falls in love with a farmer, and attempts to defy society's rules, but ultimately drifts back into the (superficially) safe haven of respectable marriage. The second half of the novel then focuses on the protagonist's horrible suffering as the wife of a diseased Old Man, and ends tragically. In this novel, the protagonist's departure from traditional relationship patterns precedes the marriage episode – precedes her long suffering under the tyranny of a binary man, and the revaluation of her feminine attributes achieved thereby. As a consequence, Jessamine's initial desire for freedom appears to be little more than a desire to rebel blindly against society's conventions. Whereas the suffering of Beth, Rebekah, Hadria and Hester creates a favourable atmosphere for their departure from their Old Men counterparts in the latter parts of those novels, Jessamine is little more than a precocious teenager when she contemplates a free union with a lower-class man. Because it is difficult for readers to interpret her nonconformity as necessary for her survival, they are consequently less inclined to condone it: her rebellion of necessity

seems to the audience, and is indeed classified by the narrator,[112] as the "blind" groping of an inexperienced and selfish girl. Conversely, after her seven years of marriage to the binary and diseased Lord Heriot, the novel's moral conscience Dr. Cornerstone explicitly wishes Jessamine another chance at "scandalous" freedom and encourages her to leave her husband.[113]

Interestingly, the narrator of *A Superfluous Woman* also seems to blame the structure of events in Jessamine's life for her failure to assess the worth of her lover correctly. Because of her lack of familiarity with the horrors that await her in her binary marriage to a diseased man, Jessamine is not able to appreciate the eugenically perfect, if lower-class, Colin: "All the best gifts he had to offer seemed to her half-swooning heart as fetters and a dungeon",[114] the narrator explains. Conversely, the reader is led to assume that Jessamine would have made a better choice (eugenically better, if not from the point of view of respectability) if she had married and suffered under Lord Heriot first.

Emma Liggins suggests that "Jessamine is not 'daring' enough to purchase sexual pleasure and emancipation at the price of permanent withdrawal from civilised society",[115] but I would argue that in analogy to the novels examined above, the inclusion of the binary man and the depiction of Jessamine's suffering in her traditional marriage to a diseased and corrupted husband validates Brooke's message. What makes this novel different from the ones I have examined before is the fact that Jessamine's desire for freedom is not supported by her experiences at the point at which she

[112] The narrator says about Jessamine's affair that it is "as indecorous a piece of human passion as ever startled the world". Note that this comment is in strong opposition to the tone in which other narrators, for instance in the novels examined above, comment on the protagonist's desire to depart from the traditional man. Emma Frances Brooke, *A Superfluous Woman* (New York: The Cassell Publishing Company, 1894), p. 138. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: ASW p. 138. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org). (ASW p. 138).
[113] After he has interviewed both partners, Dr Cornerstone exclaims: "I do not hesitate . . . to say that it is your plain duty to separate from Heriot – to resign a life which is for you a degradation." ASW p. 263
[114] ASW p. 224
[115] Liggins, "Writing against the 'Husband-Fiend'": p. 188.

contemplates her radical step. Her departure from traditional gender roles is justified only retroactively, and while this structure increases the likelihood of the character's collapse into conformity and her tragic defeat, the novel as a whole, and specifically the portrait of the binary man and the New Woman's sacrifice to him, carries Brooke's point about the importance of eugenically sound marriages. Here, as in the novels examined above, the specific depiction of masculinity protects the protagonist from being criticised over much for her desire for freedom.

In conclusion, the revaluation of feminine attributes endears the protagonist to her readers, and the fiction of the diseased tyrannical husband justifies her departure from traditional patterns of relationship. The creation of binary male characters – Old Men, traditional men, "husband-fiends" – accordingly serves multiple purposes. On the one hand, it suggests that the binary code of the sexes needed to be reworked because it corrupted men. On the other hand, the depiction of the protagonist's suffering during the revaluation episode confirmed that New Women protagonists (and by deduction, authors) were actually sensitive, sacrificing and patient – not unsexed, and certainly not "mannish", but rather good traditional women whose disillusionment with the Old Man's vices was the only reason for their rebellion. In addition, the comparison of the traditional man with the New Woman protagonist's (uncharacteristically) feminine response was designed to elevate traditional feminine attributes (such as pity, emotionality, empathy, care, patience) over the masculine attributes that characterise the "husband-fiend" – for instance, his sternness, intellectuality, or hunting instinct. By contrasting the New Woman protagonist's traditionally feminine response with her partner's tyranny, the novels considered in this chapter all elevate feminine attributes over masculine ones, and thereby achieve a revaluation of the traditional concepts of man and woman.

By chronicling her interaction with Old Manhood, New Women writers successfully freed their protagonist of the obligations of the past. But where would she go from here? This is no trivial question for the time frame under consideration, in which an incompatible woman was quickly accused of being "odd" and "superfluous". Even if her incompatibility was not her own fault – and the fiction of the binary man skilfully suggests that it was not – the New Woman author's successful disruption of what Kristen Guest has called "the binary organization of difference central to Victorian notions of gender"[116] placed her under a perceived obligation to pair her protagonist anew – to silence her critics by making the odd even again, and the superfluous necessary. In the following chapter, I will examine a type of male character who seems to achieve exactly that. He is the opposite of the binary man – feminised, weak and dependent – and he enables the protagonist to develop a range of attributes and to excel in a range of functions traditionally associated with maleness. This impaired man, I will argue in the next chapter, averted the New Woman's oddness, but he did so at a high cost.

[116] Kristen Guest, "The Subject of Money: Late-Victorian Melodrama's Crisis of Masculinity", *Victorian Studies* 49.4 (2007), pp. 635-57: p. 653.

II. RE-ASSOCIATION AND THE PHENOMENON OF THE IMPAIRED MAN

> The men are passive, suffering, rather good than otherwise, victims of [the New Women protagonists] and of fate. Not only do they never dominate, but they are quite incapable of holding their own against these remorseless ministers of destiny, these determined operators, managing all the machinery of life so as to secure their own way. This is one of the most curious developments of recent fiction.[1]
>
> Margaret Oliphant

In the previous chapter, I have examined the type of man that Hugh Stutfield thought of as typical for New Woman fiction – the blackguard or "husband-fiend" who was created to register the author's discontent with the prevalent methods of socialising men.

However, not all men in New Woman fiction are diseased tyrants. Margaret Oliphant, who had likewise felt compelled to review New Woman fiction with a critical eye, and who was no less indignant about her impression of the New Woman's man, nevertheless described as typical for this fiction a character diametrically opposed to the one that so upset Stutfield. On the following pages, I will examine novels that feature this "passive" type of man that Oliphant describes in the above quotation.

The creation of male characters who fall short of the established standard of masculinity, whether they do so because of a physically disability, or because of a passive and yielding disposition that contradicts the contemporary ideal of a man, is not limited to New Woman fiction. In *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter has pointed out that the tendency to afflict male characters with an impairment (what she calls "the blinding, maiming, or blighting motif") is also present in novels by British women writers of an earlier time frame than the one under consideration here.

[1] Oliphant, "The Anti-Marriage League": p. 140.

Showalter refers, among others, to Charlotte Brontë's Edward Rochester and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Romney Leigh to make her point.[2]

Ann Heilmann, in *New Woman Fiction*, has furthermore argued that the "tradition" of impairing male characters continued into the New Woman period. However, she discerns a difference in the specific conditions of this impairment:

> [w]hile earlier writers had constructed Byronic heroes whose moral ambivalence was counterbalanced by the chastening impact of a symbolic demasculation, fin-de-siècle feminists tended to create femininized and androgynous lovers whose ethereal bodies and spiritual frame of mind posed no threat to the New Woman.[3]

While Showalter's definition centres on male characters whose physical body was the locus of their impairment, Heilmann's observations on the subject include male characters with physically intact (if fragile) bodies, whose inability – or unwillingness – to pose a threat to the protagonists stems from their character disposition, rather than from a physical disability. However, the continuous use of impairment as a strategy in the representation of male characters strikes me more than the difference that Heilmann foregrounds. Why did New Women writers, and for that matter, Victorian writers before them, create these impaired men?

Before answering this question, I must first point out that impaired male characters are not of necessity the creations of different authors than those examined in the first chapter - binary and impaired men are not simply the products of opposing worldviews. Quite the contrary, several authors of the New Woman period directly contrast the "husband-fiend" type of man with a passive, malleable man within the same novel. This is the case, for instance, in *The Beth Book*: after her harrowing marital experiences and eventual separation from her husband, Beth meets the American painter Arthur Brock, whose effect on her is diametrically opposed to Daniel Maclure's. With

[2] Cf. Elaine Showalter, "Feminine Heroes: The Woman's Man", in Elaine Showalter (ed.), A Literature of Their Own, from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing (London: Virago, 1982), p. 150.
[3] Heilmann, New Woman Fiction, p. 96.

Arthur, Beth rediscovers those attributes which had characterised her as a child: her determination, her self-dependence and her aggression. These attributes are obviously not part of the traditional image of woman, but rather belong to the cluster of attributes then commonly associated with man. They are also, I suggest, responsible for the perception of characters like Beth as "new", quite simply because the traditional view of the sexes held that the attribute clusters of man and woman (and the resulting gender roles) were fixed by nature, and did not contain attributes of the opposite sex. Consequently, a woman who displayed masculine attributes was perforce *unnaturally* new.

The creation of female protagonists who possess recognisably masculine character attributes, a process which I refer to here as re-association, questions the existence of innate sex-specific attributes by arguing that many women naturally display attributes which were supposed to be the monopoly of men. Other than the attempt simply to adjust the relative value of the concepts of man and woman, observed in the previous chapter, re-association often produced characters who jarred with Victorian notions of proper behaviour. Female protagonists who were powerful and energetic – rather than weak and passive – swiftly incurred accusations of mannishness and, as the above excerpt from Oliphant's reckoning with the genre shows, male characters who displayed recognisably feminine attributes often fared little better. On the following pages, I will refer to such male characters as *impaired men*,[4] rather than as feminised men. It will be my argument below that these characters, like binary male characters, serve a purpose in New Woman fiction, in that the circumstances of their impairment

[4] I have chosen the term "impaired" for this type of character not despite, but rather because of its negative connotations. Although I see these passive, feminised men as in many ways opposed to the binary men discussed in the first chapter, this circumstance does not in itself justify a more positive collective term. In fact, impaired men are not straightforwardly positive characters, nor do they contribute in a simple way to the idea of gender equality. This is a crucial finding of my thesis that will become clearer as the chapter advances. In the meantime, even if the character in question does not always suffer from a physical disability, the term "impaired" will remind the reader that the characters I examine here are not of necessity positive, flawless "New Men", even if their effect on the protagonist is the reverse of the binary men's.

(which are often quite specific) help to justify the protagonist's ascension to male power and privilege. As before, a few introductory remarks on my labelling of this type of character precede the gathering of supporting evidence in the close readings below. Impairment, in my definition, is any type of circumstance that prevents a man from fulfilling the traditional binary role of a man. Invalids, men of a different social standing, celibates and married men are all variations of the concept of impairment. Impaired men are typically lovers, friends, colleagues, or admirers of the protagonist, rather than husbands, fathers, or brothers. While the binary man allows the author to explore and ultimately discard the received idea of masculinity, I propose that the creation of impaired male characters can help to solve what Casey Althea Cothran has described as the "dilemma faced by *fin de siècle* audiences and writers":

> how does one establish the image of a moral and honorable heroine . . . who asserts a desire to remain independent and to participate in positions of society traditionally reserved for men?[5]

Impaired men, in my reading, are characters who by default fail to occupy the space that was "traditionally reserved for men". An invalid cannot leave his bed and must be watched over and possibly funded; celibates and married men have forfeited their rights to a position of intimate dominance over any (or any other but their own) woman; and in the quintessentially class-conscious world of the New Woman, a working-class man was always at least in dire need of moral guidance, if he did not actually require feeding and housing. Because of their inability or unwillingness to dominate the protagonist, impaired men leave the space traditionally reserved for men unoccupied; hence the New Woman protagonist can fill this space without a preliminary power struggle. Similar to the binary man whose faultiness justified the female protagonist's departure from traditional ideas of gender, the impaired man, by virtue of his impairment, justifies her display of masculine attributes and her ensuing empowerment. Like the "husband-

[5] Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire", p. 45.

fiend" examined in the previous chapter, it will become apparent that this type of man, which Margaret Oliphant judged to be typical of the New Woman's representation of masculinity, was indeed a recurring feature of women's writing at the *fin de siècle*, although his effect on the protagonist is diametrically opposed to that of the binary man.

I will focus here on two types of impairment: sickness, and the temporary delusion that is created in some novels by the female protagonists' cross-dressing. Both of these plot devices create a space for a redistribution of power between the female protagonist and her partner: in the first case, the impaired man's illness prevents him from performing in the traditional masculine role; in the second, his delusion about the cross-dressed protagonist's biological sex has the same effect. In either case, the result is a brief space of time during which the normal rules of society, including and especially the binary gender roles, are turned on their head by the impaired man's dependency on the protagonist (or by his delusion about her sex).[6] These episodes will be one of the focal points of this chapter.

Another strand of analysis will focus on a phenomenon that I refer to as *recoil*. In the works examined in this chapter – Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* and *The Heavenly Twins*, George Egerton's "A Regeneration of Two", and Lady Florence Dixie's *Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900*[7] – the renegotiation of the binary code is only temporary, and before the close of the novel the couples examined here suddenly return to a "pre-revolutionary" state in which the traditional gender roles are, to a certain

[6] On the subject of the sickroom in the fiction of Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens and George Eliot, Miriam Bailin has argued that "the literary sickroom [is] a legitimized site for the representation of an alternative society and mode of existence". Miriam Bailin, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction: The Art of Being Ill*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth Century Literature and Culture, eds. Gillian Beer and Catherine Gallagher, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 9. Bailin also contends that "[s]cenes of illness intervene when narratives reach an impasse which cannot be overcome without the violation of accepted social and formal codes". Bailin, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction*, p. 15. I think her findings can be applied to certain New Women novels as well. The gender binary, in my view, was an accepted social code which was difficult to contest, and sickroom episodes were inserted into a number of New Women novels in which the protagonist's emancipation would otherwise have reached an "impasse".

[7] Other characters of New Woman Fiction which I read as impaired include: Harry Lancaster of WoA, Melton Perry of MB, Waldo Farber of SAF, Professor Fortescue of DoD, Dr Mac of WoG, and Mr Drummond of MtM.

extent, re-established. Recoil is a surprising and, from a modern point of view, exasperating feature of New Woman literature. However, it is also a very prevalent feature that merits close attention. Accordingly, my reading of the novels examined in this chapter will focus on two complementary aspects of impairment: its potential for the reconstruction of the gender roles, and its frequent disintegration into periods of recoil.

The Beth Book, Sarah Grand

Throughout *The Beth Book*, Sarah Grand's protagonist is repeatedly paired with characters that I interpret as impaired men – in fact, her relationship with the traditional Daniel is an exception in this novel. Most of Beth's male acquaintances, both friends and lovers, actually stimulate or force her to develop her masculine side, instead of suppressing it, and in the course of her life Beth therefore occupies a number of positions which are "traditionally reserved for men",[8] in Cothran's words. For instance, when her family undergoes a period of intense poverty, Beth begins to poach on her uncle's lands. She invents a masculine persona ("Loyal Heart" or "the Trapper") and derives intense satisfaction from providing for her mother and sisters during their time of need. Her role as the family breadwinner is contrasted explicitly with her brother Jim's failure to add to the family funds:

> [i]n fact, had it not been for Loyal Heart the family would have pretty nearly starved that winter because of Jim, who had contracted debts like a man, which his mother had to pay.[9]

As a child, Beth is furthermore repeatedly described as "valiant", "daring", and "brave",[10] all of which attributes were associated with Victorian notions of masculinity rather than femininity. Among the many comparisons which Sarah Grand draws between her protagonist and various male characters, two are especially interesting: her childhood friendship with Samuel "Sammy" Lee, and her flirtation with Alfred Cayley Pounce.

When she is about eleven years old, Beth befriends Samuel Lee, a boy who lives nearby. From the beginning, it is she who animates this relationship for her own pleasure, and who remains in control of it at all times. Although Samuel perpetually

[8] Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire", p. 45.
[9] BB p. 190.
[10] BB p. 183 and BB p. 268 ("valiant"), BB p. 66 ("daring", referring to Beth and her siblings), BB p. 485 ("brave", referring to Beth's "brave self-contained habits").

rattles off deprecatory remarks about the inaptitude of "gels", he is in reality happy to follow Beth's instructions and relies on her inventiveness during playtime. He is also afraid of her mother and easily frightened, so that his traditional attitude to the gender roles is mocked by his actual character. When Beth realises to her disappointment that Samuel is not only a coward, but also deficient in intellect,[11] she reacts by splitting him in half – "Sammy on the spot" and "Sammy adored at a distance" – and tolerates the former only because the latter, specifically Samuel's "cherubic face",[12] inspires her to write poetry. In short, she assigns to him the (traditionally feminine) role of a muse.[13] And while Beth is not the first poet to reverse the traditional relationship of male poet and female muse, she is almost certainly the first female poet who, instead of waiting patiently to be inspired, beats up her muse for quicker access to inspiration.[14] However, this usurpation of masculine attributes and positions appears less invasive because Samuel is not a "proper" traditional boy. He is less manly than Beth herself: "less valiant than she was, [and] less willing to brave danger for her sake than she was for his",[15] as the narrator points out. His lacklustre performance as a traditional boy thus justifies Beth's redistribution of the traditional positions of poet and muse, and her usurpation of his role.

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[11] A surprising number of positive male characters in New Woman fiction commit the same error of judgement. Professor Fortescue (DoD), Sir Nigel (of Arabella Kenealy's *The Marriage Yoke*), Lord Newhaven and Hugh Scarlett (RP), Mr Drummond (MtM), and Melton Perry (MB), to name but a few, all choose an erstwhile wife/lover who is beautiful but deficient in intellect. Based on this evidence, one could argue that Beth makes a "masculine" mistake here, meaning that she re-associates masculine faults together with masculine qualities.

[12] BB p. 189.

[13] For an interesting analysis of the female Victorian poet's struggle with the concept of the muse, cf. Dorothy Mermin's analysis of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti's poetry in: Dorothy Mermin, "The Damsel, the Knight, and the Victorian Woman Poet", *Critical Inquiry* 13.1 (1986), pp. 64-80. In addition, Catherine Delyfer has pointed out that Vernon Lee's novella *Lady Tal* also features a reversed poet-muse relationship. Catherine Delyfer, "Rewriting the Myth of Atalanta: Sex and Style in Vernon Lee's 'Lady Tal'", *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 2.2 (2006), pp. 1-21: esp. p. 16. Also note Elaine Showalter's interesting analysis of late Victorian men's tendency to invent male muses to counteract the growing influence of women in literature: Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, Women's Studies (London: Virago, 1992), p. 78.

[14] Beth experiences a boost of creativity after she has hit Sammy (cf. BB Ch. XIX). This questionable method further increases her empowerment at his expense by eliminating the traditional dependency of the poet on the muse's whims.

[15] BB p. 169.

Beth's later attachment to Alfred Cayley Pounce continues along similar lines. During their first meeting, the couple is trapped on the cliffs by the incoming tide and almost drowns. The episode at once reveals that Alfred cannot begin to match Beth's self-control and strength. The narrator recounts:

> Alfred's face was grey and distorted. He groaned aloud . . . She had really the more to suffer of the two, for every wave nearly covered her; but her nerve and physique were better than his, and her will was of iron. The only thing that disturbed her fortitude were the signs of distress from him.[16]

Structurally, this episode is similar to Beth's relationship with Samuel. The outward sum of sex-specific attributes between Beth and Alfred does not change in comparison to a traditional couple: there is physical strength, an iron will and nerve, fortitude and silence on the one side, and weakness, fear, visible signs and sounds of distress on the other. *The Beth Book*'s provocation lies in the forceful re-association of these attributes from their traditional binary concepts: here it is not the man who is naturally strong and silent, but the woman. If Beth's and Alfred's names were exchanged in the above extract, it would be stoutly conservative. As it is, the episode suggests an element of carnival – of a world turned topsy-turvy – and it is not difficult to imagine how the above scene must have struck a reader who believed that the attribute clusters of man and woman were natural givens. However, Beth's grandest usurpation of a man's position at this point lies far in her future. Instead of continuing to act in the role and with the attributes of men, she "suddenly and almost inexplicably"[17] marries a traditional man and discovers her feminine patience and gentleness,[18] and it is only after her separation from Daniel that she realises how submitting to her husband has kept her in an unnatural state of helplessness, for "so long as she went about under escort . . . she never knew where she was".

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[16] BB p. 263.
[17] These are Gail Cunningham's terms: Cunningham, *The New Woman*, p. 106.
[18] Cf. my discussion of BB in the first chapter.

> [T]his little experience taught her why it is that the intelligence of women seems childishly defective as regards many of the details of the business of life. They have the faculty, but when they are not allowed to act for themselves, it remains imperfectly developed or is altogether atrophied for want of exercise.[19]

This is a fitting prelude for the relationship Beth develops with her new neighbour Arthur Milbank Brock after her relocation to London, for when the young man comes down with a bad case of rheumatic fever shortly after her arrival, Beth nurses him through a long winter in which she gradually comes to occupy a number of traditionally male positions, while he is reduced to a helpless and dependent invalid.

From the beginning of Arthur's illness, Beth takes all money matters into her hands. After his savings are exhausted, she secretly begins adding her own money, and by efficient management, as well as by starving herself, she successfully ekes out their joint funds to facilitate his recovery.[20] The financial side of Beth's responsibilities often takes her outside of her home to sell her valuables and to buy necessities. Haggling over prices, dodging temptations and coping with the overwhelming squalor and starvation of her London quarter are all part of Beth's daily routine, and although she is hard pressed, she purposely deludes Arthur about the state of his financial resources:

> Arthur's income depended principally upon the pictures he sold, and no more money came in after he fell ill. He had had some by him, but not nearly so much as he supposed, and it was all gone now, in spite of the utmost economy on Beth's part. Her own, too, was running short . . . She had still some of Arthur Brock's, but that she kept that she might be able to tell him truthfully that it was not all done when he asked about it – a pious fraud which relieved his mind and kept him from retarding his recovery by attempting to begin work again before he was fit for it.[21]

To the headstrong and self-reliant Beth, Arthur's illness is the perfect opportunity to prove herself, and she successfully re-associates all those masculine attributes that Arthur has been forced to give up. When Beth muses that Arthur's illness is the

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[19] BB pp. 535-6.
[20] Beth's financial responsibility after her separation from her husband forms a stark contrast to her marriage, during which Daniel refused to give her any housekeeping money for fear of her being wasteful. BB p. 369. The impaired man, by contrast, proves that Beth is an excellent financial manager.
[21] BB p. 549.

"homiest time" she has had since the death of her favourite aunt, and that "she loved it",[22] it is possible to read this happiness as a result of her devotion to Arthur, but it is equally possible, I would suggest, to read it as a result of her satisfaction with her new power. Beth is happy that she has "no help" and does "everything for herself"[23] principally because she enjoys Arthur's dependence: "[n]ow that she had some one that she could respect and care for *dependent on her* . . . the time never hung heavily on her hands, as it used to do in the married days".[24] "I'm hardy", Beth summarises, and Arthur complies: "[w]oman's work and man's work are just anything that they can do for each other",[25] which under the circumstances means that Beth can (and must) do everything – Arthur's illness practically forces her to emancipate herself. Conversely, he becomes so lean during the course of the winter that Beth can carry him in a sheet with the help of two other women.[26] He also displays several feminine attributes such as patience, gentleness and "extreme weakness":

> So long as he could see her he was satisfied, and would lie for hours, patiently controlling himself for fear of disturbing her by uttering exclamations or making other signs of suffering; but when she had to leave him alone, he broke down and moaned in his weakness and pain for her to come back and help him.[27]

In summary, Arthur's impairment supplies a perfect justification for Beth's wish to keep all power to herself. He is, as the narrator explains, not "fit for it": not fit for the truth, not fit for making decisions about his own life, not fit, in short, to fulfil the role of a binary man. The brilliance of this construction is that Beth remains largely free from blame, although she practices "pious frauds" on him and even ignores his wishes outright, because like all invalids he is not of sound mind (or so Beth decides): "[h]e

[22] BB p. 548.
[23] BB p. 545.
[24] BB p. 548, emphasis added.
[25] BB p. 546, BB p. 548.
[26] BB p. 542. Although the community of women is not as central to BB as it is to other New Women novels, most notably GoP (discussed below) and RoT (discussed below), their support for each other, even if expressed only in sympathy, is vital to all members of the female community at Beth's Bayswater lodging house.
[27] BB p. 549, BB p. 542.

objected to the doctor, but she paid no attention to his remonstrance". Although she treats Arthur like a child by not allowing him to take a share in her anxiety, Beth is able to justify his disempowerment by claiming that it is in his best interest. The fiction of the impaired man, especially one that suffers from a life-threatening illness, is thus uniquely suited to temper the violence of a woman's ascension to masculine privilege.

Beth's financial supervision is furthermore mitigated by her feminine devotion to nursing and nurturing Arthur. She attends to him "with the exactness and method of a capable nurse",[28] and he actually only sees her when she is engaged in doing his household tasks. In this way, all instances of Beth's more aggressive occupation of attributes or privileges traditionally reserved for men are interwoven with examples of her nursing skills, or with household services she renders to Arthur. Likewise, the narrator repeatedly emphasises that Beth is starving herself to death in an attempt at perfecting the art of self-sacrifice. It is only "with the strictest self-denial" that Beth is able to "pay her way and provide for the sick man's necessities".[29] All these disclaimers notwithstanding, the episode is decidedly empowering for Beth, and perhaps the best proof of this claim is the fact that Arthur grows increasingly uneasy with her domination, and suddenly explodes one day after her extreme poverty has forced Beth to sell her hair, a decision which Arthur misinterprets as a voluntary act of rebellion against traditional womanliness. "Do you mean to say you've had your hair cut short?" he snaps at her. "Are you going to join the unsexed crew that shriek on platforms?" Beth replies:

> I don't know any unsexed crew that shriek on platforms, and I am surprised to hear you taking the tone of cheap journalism. There has been nothing in the woman movement to unsex women except the brutalities of the men who oppose them.[30]

[28] BB p. 541.
[29] BB p. 550.
[30] BB p. 552.

Arthur's implied reproach is that Beth was falling in with the radical, "unsexed" women's rights activists – more precisely, that she might want to take her personal dominance over one man to a nationwide level, without the bonds of mutual attraction to temper her actions. To this fear Beth responds ambiguously, both by criticising him for his boulevard tone and thereby supporting the movement, and by anxiously setting herself apart from the women who do raise their voices. Immediately afterwards, Arthur Brock's painter friend Gresham Powell cautions Arthur about mistaking Beth's selfless devotion for the scheme of a woman who wants to gain power over him.

> The girls you find knocking about town in these sort of places are . . . worse than the regular bad ones – more likely to trap you, you know, especially when you're shorn of your strength and have good reason to be grateful.[31]

By evoking the biblical Delilah, Powell also addresses the question of power and supremacy which Arthur had been debating with himself during the winter, as when he had complained, for instance, that "I don't feel much of a man lying here and letting you work for me".[32] Beth's short hair (which Arthur interprets as a sign of her hunger for power) and Powell's allusion to a biblical power-hungry woman finally cause him to separate from Beth to complete his recuperation outside of the range of her power.[33]

This incision in the relationship suggests that the reversal of Beth's and Arthur's gender roles was not in Grand's view a permanent utopian solution, but rather an experimental realm in which both partners are freed from conventions, and perform contrary to traditional gender role expectations. Before she turns them from nurse and patient into lovers, however, Sarah Grand reinstates Arthur into full bodily health. Considering that Beth experienced Arthur's helplessness as liberating, it is perhaps

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[31] BB p. 553.
[32] BB p. 548.
[33] Note that Powell actually cautions Arthur that Beth might be trying to pressure him into marriage. Arthur himself knows this is highly unlikely because Beth is still married to Daniel, but he leaves nevertheless, which is why I am confident in interpreting this flight as a flight from Beth's masculine dominance, rather than her (in this respect questionable) feminine power of trapping Arthur in marriage.

surprising to find that Grand chose to end Arthur's impairment before uniting the lovers as lovers. However, according to Elaine Showalter, the temporality of the impaired man's feminisation had been crucial to the judgement of his character even in earlier works of British women's fiction:

> feminine novelists . . . believed that a *limited* experience of dependency, frustration, and powerlessness – in short, of womanhood – was a healthy and instructive one for a hero.[34]

The important factor then, as apparently also during the New Woman's time, seems to have been the time limitation of the role reversal. Although his absolute dependency is momentarily attractive to Beth, Arthur's New Man potential actually suffers significantly from his sickness. A man that Beth can carry in a sheet is certainly not a man with whom she can raise the next generation, and this is one of the reasons why "there must be a readjustment"[35] between them, as the narrator explains.

Furthermore (and this is a circumstance which will recur in my reading of other novels in this and in the fourth chapter), the feeling elicited by the impaired man often crosses the border from romantic love into motherly love. His extreme dependency, while it has a liberating effect on the protagonist and inspires affection, in many cases turns out to be a bar to sexual attraction and romantic attachment.[36] So it is with Sarah Grand's Beth, whose sexual awakening had been characterised by daydreams of hyper-traditional courtship plots, rather than visions of empowerment. As a young woman, for instance, she imagines being the lover of a "rich, dark, handsome . . . man engaged upon some difficult and dangerous work for mankind", and during her marriage she is healed from a fit of jealousy by imagining that she was courted by a "knight":

> [a]s he came abreast of the window, the rider looked up, and Beth's heart bounded at the sight of his face, which was the face of a man from out of

[34] Elaine Showalter, "Feminine Heroes: The Woman's Man", in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *A Literature of Their Own, from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago, 1982), p. 150, emphasis added.
[35] BB p. 555.
[36] This circumstance will be discussed in detail below.

> the long ago, virile, knightly, high-bred, refined; the face of one that lives for others, and lives openly.[37]

Especially in situations of emotional challenge, Beth's vision of heterosexual relationships clearly resonates with traditional gender stereotypes. The fact that during a time of inner turmoil her instinctive reaction is to daydream about the age of chivalry, not about personal empowerment, could suggest Beth's periodic desire to be part of a functioning binary. Her spontaneous flight from her husband's flawed binary masculinity to the simple model of knight and dame highlights how difficult she perceives the actual relations between men and women in her own time to be. However, this vision of the chivalric age is also a dead end, a static place, from which Beth has to depart again into the more complicated reality of her own time if she wants to influence the future. And she does depart, into empowerment and the support of a "child-man"[38] whose weakness enables her to explore her own strength. However, this departure is not straightforward, as Grand concludes Beth's days of empowerment in the sickroom with an episode that returns Beth and Arthur to a more traditional distribution of power and agency.

After their argument and subsequent separation, it is Arthur who initiates the renewal of their acquaintance. As he approaches her house, fully recovered and on horseback, he immediately reminds Beth of Lancelot, while she associates herself with the Lady of Shalott.[39] This ending, which breaks quite radically with the preceding sickroom episode and seems to reverse the power structure of the relationship, has been interpreted as a severe flaw of *The Beth Book* by several critics. Norma Clarke, in

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[37] BB p. 287, BB p. 469.
[38] This is Sarah Grand's own provocative term: Sarah Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question", *The North American Review* 158.448 (1894), pp. 270-6: p. 273.
[39] The use of this motif in both BB and HT has inspired much criticism. Cf. for instance Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 295-96. Also cf. Anna Maria Jones, who examines the motif mainly in relation to Evadne of HT. Anna Maria Jones, "'A Track to the Water's Edge': Learning to Suffer in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 26.2 (2007), pp. 217-41: esp. pp. 234-5.

"Feminism and the Popular Novel of the 1890s", is of the opinion that the inclusion of Arthur weakens Beth's stance as a self-dependent New Woman:

> [t]he demon of romantic love remains . . . One can't help thinking it a pity, but then it is so thinly done, such an anaemic little rag for convention (and the man himself is so anaemic), that it almost (but not quite) doesn't matter.[40]

Clarke's frustration is a typical reaction to what I have termed periods of recoil. It is true that the disturbing effect of the return to traditional patterns of relationship cannot be explained away, more especially since *The Beth Book* does not tell how the couple restructures their relationship to reconcile Arthur's regained strength with Beth's old claim to supremacy. However, in my reading, it is this same "demon of romantic love" that first brings out Beth's full potential – that gives her a scope for the application of her masculine qualities, and a justification for doing so. I do not, therefore, regret the inclusion of the "anaemic man" as such, but rather his removal and replacement with a full-blooded knight. This, from a feminist point of view, is a regrettable exchange, but it is one that occurs with some frequency in New Woman fiction, as the next example will confirm.[41]

[40] Norma Clarke, "Feminism and the Popular Novel of the 1890s: A Brief Consideration of a Forgotten Feminist Novelist", *Feminist Review* 20 (1985), pp. 91-104: p. 103.

[41] Contrary to Norma Clarke's aversion to the inclusion of a romantic heterosexual union in BB (cited above), and to my own understanding of the episode as one of recoil, Stephanie Forward offers a much more positive reading when she argues that "[t]his positive ending to a feminist novel is of real importance; yet a number of critics have not recognised Grand's achievement". Forward, "The 'New Man'": p. 442.

"A Regeneration of Two", George Egerton

The short story "A Regeneration of Two" by George Egerton (Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright) was published in the collection *Discords* in 1895. Like *The Beth Book*, it contains an episode in which a New Woman protagonist ("Fruen") nurses an impaired man ("the poet") back to health. During this episode, the story emphasises Fruen's share of what were assumed to be exclusively masculine attributes. Again, like *The Beth Book*, Egerton's short story has a happy ending, as Fruen and the poet enter into a free union after his recovery.

At the beginning of the narrative, Fruen is hampered by her traditional costume and conventional behaviour. Widowed and well-off, she is unhappy without knowing why. On a spontaneous daytrip, she meets "the crack-brained poet",[42] as she secretly calls him, and their long discussion about women's position and duties in the world has the effect of revealing Fruen to herself. This revelation is painful, because the poet is convinced that the present deplorable state of the world is women's fault.[43] He lectures her on the type of woman she should aspire to be, without believing that she has the power to break out of the confines of her traditional upbringing. However, Fruen takes his words to heart, and subsequently leaves her old life behind to establish a home for fallen women in the countryside. Her new resolutions are expressed in a change of wardrobe, as she leaves off wearing stays and instead spins herself a flowing crimson dress: "I like it; I spun an awful lot of thoughts into it, – much of my old self; and when it was finished, I was new".[44] Although Fruen is "far above the average height", with a "singularly strong" throat and hands that suggest "delicate strength", and looks "tall and

[42] George Egerton, "A Regeneration of Two", in *Discords* (London: John Lane, 1894), p. 210. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: RoT p. 210. This short story is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org) as a part of the collection *Discords*. "Crack-brained poet" is the poet's description of himself when he meets Fruen.
[43] Witness his discourse on why women have failed to live up to his high standards (RoT pp. 192-6) which ends with the peevish exclamation: "[s]o much for women!" (RoT p. 196).
[44] RoT p. 243.

gracious and strong"[45] after her regeneration, she is not "mannish", for the new dress she has fashioned to match her changed outlook was woven by her own hands. To remove her further from the "ordinary unsexed crew that shriek on platforms",[46] Egerton makes her exclaim early on in the story that she is fatigued by "suffrage, social reformation, politics" and "the advanced women" of her time: "philanthropy", Fruen maintains, is "a masculine attribute".[47] Her own attempt at changing society, although one might refer to it as philanthropic in its conception, is decidedly different from stereotypical philanthropic schemes, such as East End visitations, because on Fruen's estate women work for their bread instead of receiving it as charity.[48]

For several years, Fruen manages and expands her project. She re-discovers forgotten ways of farming and cloth production, coaxes the nearby village into acceptance, and although the narrator hints that she is waiting to meet the poet again, she is not wasting any time with pining. Suddenly, during a nightly snow storm, the poet's dog Bikkje reaches her estate, and Fruen concludes that the poet must be stranded somewhere in the vicinity. She immediately organises a rescue mission with the help of Gunhild, her cattle maid, and Brownie, the sleigh horse, who is spurred to action by repeated entreaties to the "old girl".[49] Since Egerton is careful to point out that "Bikkje" is Norwegian for "little bitch",[50] readers cannot help but notice that the entire lifesaving machinery put into motion to save the poet from certain extinction is female.

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[45] RoT p. 171, RoT p. 164, RoT p. 232.
[46] BB p. 552.
[47] RoT p. 166.
[48] Lucy Bland and Patricia Stubbs have both pointed out that RoT has utopian aspects. (Lucy Bland, "The Married Woman, the 'New Woman' and the Feminist: Sexual Politics of the 1890s", in Jane Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different – Women's Politics 1800-1914* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 155.) Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 111-12. I agree with this reading, yet I would like to emphasise that RoT's utopia is not brought about by a change in society, but by the protagonist's self-confident defiance of society "as is". In keeping with the body of Egerton's work, RoT argues for women's individual sexual rights, not for political change. This differentiates RoT from a political utopia such as, for instance, Lady Florence Dixie's *Gloriana* (discussed below).
[49] RoT p. 223.
[50] RoT p. 218.

This rescue mission is the beginning of a period during which the poet's former arrogant superiority over Fruen is dismantled by her and by other members of her household, including the estate's veterinary doctor, who reveals that the poet is illegitimate, and the cattle maid Gunhild, who treats him throughout like a sick animal rather than an intelligent human being. For instance, when she undresses him after his accident, she "laughs and handles him like a young kid, strips him stark naked without paying the slightest heed to his remonstrances and rolls him unceremoniously in a blanket".[51] This refusal to heed the patient's remonstrances poignantly reverses the belittling of women's opinions in the matter of their own health which was so usual for the period,[52] and so bitterly resented by many protagonists.

During the poet's illness, most of the commentary that hints at his impaired status is provided by Gunhild, by Fruen's veterinary doctor, and by the narrator. These three compete with each other for the best cattle metaphor, analysing in turn the poet's race, breed, bone-meat ratio and potential obstinacy to curbing: "[i]f you take him in hand, you've got to give him a loose rein and leave the stable door open. He'll come home all right; but don't put the curb on" the doctor advises Fruen.[53] Obviously Gunhild and the doctor are cattle people, and their metaphors add to the local colour of the story, but Gunhild's identical treatment of the sick man and her cows is too frequently condoned by the narrator to be set down as a humorous aside.[54]

Moreover, the poet's behaviour during his "regeneration" justifies the other character's good-willed condescension. He behaves alternately like a naughty child, who throws pillows on the floor to vent his anger, and like a hurt animal that Gunhild

[51] RoT p. 227.
[52] Examples include MtM's Rebekah, who almost loses her mind over her husband's repressive attitude, and the protagonist of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper", who does lose her mind for the same reason. Note that there is a marked parallel here to Beth's contention that it is best for Arthur if she lies to him about his savings. Since it was traditionally women who were denied access to information about the actual state of their health, the traditional gender roles are reversed in both BB and RoT.
[53] RoT p. 234
[54] It is perhaps worth pointing out that Fruen herself also never considers consulting a doctor for human patients – she follows the advice of the estate's veterinary doctor in the treatment of the poet.

has to guide through the easiest tasks: "[l]ean on the other foot and help yourself! Uf! men are like calves, if they've got a limb they mustn't use, that's the one they'll want to put to the ground".[55] Jomfrue Aagot, Fruen's maidservant, compares him to "a new-weaned child", calls him a "restless thing", and her complaint causes Fruen to go to his room to "scold" him for his "misbehaving", whereupon "he smiles like a pleased child".[56] In addition, Fruen at one point describes him as "her comic great child, child in his greatest moments, with a little of the child's desire for praise, a little of the child's 'show-off', happiest when fooled for his own good".[57] If one compares these passages to the earlier descriptions of the poet, his diminution becomes obvious. The poet first appeared to Fruen as "a shadow unseizable" "to whom she is almost afraid to talk",[58] but his dependence on her and her household during his illness obliterates this shadowy aura. Invalids are defined by their body, its malfunctions and needs, and in addition, the poet's delirium paralyses his strongest weapon: unable to use his brain, unable therefore to take the moral high ground, he has become very "seizable" indeed, while Fruen has grown in his estimation to an almost superhuman being.

In comparison to *The Beth Book*, it is worth observing that Fruen generally keeps out or is sent out of the sickroom whenever actual nursing is required – she only mentions watching over the poet's pillow when he is asleep or delirious, and once she pours him a cup of tea. Even though the narrator emphasises that at the time of the rescue, the poet and Fruen are physical equals and that she is able to heave him into a sleigh and carry him up a flight of stairs with the help of Gunhild, the poet himself is largely unconscious of these manoeuvres, or aware only of Gunhild's share in them. In contrast to *The Beth Book*, where Beth witnessed the full extent of Arthur's helplessness, in "A Regeneration of Two" it is mainly the reader who is invited to

[55] RoT p. 227.
[56] RoT p. 234, RoT p. 236, RoT p. 235.
[57] RoT p. 248.
[58] RoT p. 186.

compare the relative strength and positions of Fruen and the poet. Her absence from the sickroom can be interpreted as discretion; it certainly eases the transition of their relationship from patient and nurse to lovers. However, her position as head of the household which nurses the poet through his difficult illness ensures that the reader – and the poet – witnesses her financial and managerial power, which complements Gunhild's physical power over the weak and wounded patient. Although she does not witness his physical impairment first-hand, Fruen's position joins the financial support associated with a *pater familias* to the emotional attachment of a mother.

After this period of empowerment for Fruen, "A Regeneration of Two", like *The Beth Book*, adjusts the relative position of the lovers to a more traditional ideal. When the poet is fully on the way to recovery, Fruen visits him to talk of the household she has organised, and he is at first enthusiastic: "the colony of women managed by a woman, going their own way to hold a place in the world in face of opinion, . . . fired his fancy".[59] However, the combination of his impairment and what he sees as Fruen's perfection (she has modelled her new life according to his ideal of a woman) soon begins to work on him. He first begins to rebel at her empowerment at his expense when he sees her return from a long drive late in the evening. While "the quiet way she handles her reins, and the firm face, touched by the moonlight" initially draws his admiration for the "great strong silver witch", her failure to make a prompt appearance at his bedside sends him into a similar fury that resembles Arthur's reaction to Beth's cutting off her hair. Remembering their past encounters, the poet then purposely "recalls the caress in her voice as she said good-night, the look in her eyes, as she bent over his bed, and anathematizes her for a coquette; all women are alike". In *The Beth Book*, Arthur rebels against Beth's empowerment when he feels that it might bespeak an alliance with the women's movement, with women's empowerment, rather than with

[59] RoT p. 232.

her personal inclination to nurse him. The poet's fear that Fruen might be a coquette is another expression of the same thought; that Fruen might be less interested in him personally, and more in the idea of power as such. "His mood darkens, his thoughts embitter, the silver witch of a while ago becomes the embodiment of the social force that crushes him".[60]

Unlike Sarah Grand's decision to separate Beth and Arthur before their union as lovers, the sickroom episode in "A Regeneration of Two" is ended by two intimate conversations in which Fruen acknowledges the poet's share in her transformation.[61] This revelation restores a more traditional power balance between the two because it allows the poet to feel that the "new" Fruen is in many ways *his* creation. By crediting him with the creation of her new self, the poet is turned from an object of charity into a subject, from an outsider into the source of Fruen's New Womanhood. This incision is less absolute than in *The Beth Book*, arguably because the sickroom episode is mitigated by the distribution of services between the different caretakers – Gunhild, Aagot, Fruen, and the doctor – which prevents Fruen's empowerment from becoming absolute. Nevertheless, the ending of Egerton's short story to me suggests a measure of recoil from the emancipatory heights of the sickroom period: when the poet, in answer to Fruen's consent to a free union with him, exclaims: "[n]ow you are a whole woman!"[62] Egerton re-invests him with an authority to decide about the status of Fruen's womanhood which the previous pages did not grant him.

In conclusion, in both *The Beth Book* and "A Regeneration of Two" the impaired man's dependence temporarily empowers the protagonist. Both Arthur and the poet are on the verge of death, frequently unconscious, and in need of financial support

[60] RoT p. 237, also the previous three quotations. Even though Arthur and the poet are both hailed as a new type of man, their horror of powerful women in league with a larger social body of like-minded sisters (be they suffragettes or coquettes) raises a serious question about these New Men's actual novelty, which will be considered in the conclusion to this work.
[61] Until this conversation he does not remember having met her before.
[62] RoT p. 252

– they are utterly unable to hinder Fruen's and Beth's emancipation. In response, both protagonists develop into fully rounded characters who display a range of masculine attributes which they did not hitherto display on such a scale (even though they were always to some degree present), and occupy a range of positions "traditionally reserved for men"[63] in an attempt to protect their sick partners. Yet, and this is another interesting parallel, both men develop a growing dislike for their situation which ultimately encroaches on their feelings for their caretakers, and in both works, more traditional gender relations are restored before the protagonist and the (formerly) impaired man are united as lovers. On the following pages, I will examine a different construction that in my reading also depends crucially on an impaired man for its success in empowering the protagonist: cross-dressing episodes.

[63] Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire", p. 45.

The Heavenly Twins, Sarah Grand

Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* was a bestseller, and remains one of the best known examples of New Woman fiction today. The novel follows the development of three different women: Angelica Hamilton-Wells, Evadne Frayling, and Edith Beale. While it would be worthwhile to read the stories of Edith and Evadne with a view to my interpretation of the binary man (both are eventually married to diseased "husband-fiends", but only Evadne outlives her marriage through a combination of feminine purity and masculine willpower), it is the story of Angelica's re-association of masculine attributes which will be examined here.

Of the three women that shape the novel, Angelica is clearly the least conventionally feminine character, and while it seems to be Evadne's function to elevate traditionally feminine attributes against her "vice-worn"[64] husband, Sarah Grand uses the character of Angelica to contest the notion that women are born only with feminine attributes, and never under any circumstances display attributes which are gendered masculine. When the novel opens, Angelica and her twin brother Theodore "Diavolo" are still children, but Angelica already surpasses him in many of the attributes which to contemporaries suggested maleness: she is "the dark one", "the elder, taller, stronger, and wickeder of the two",[65] while Diavolo excels mostly in the function of a right hand man to his sister. On the subject of *The Heavenly Twins*, Ann Heilmann remarks that "[b]y juxtaposing different-sexed twins whose sex roles clash with their 'natural' inclination, Grand explicitly challenges the social construction of

[64] HT (vol.1) p. 81

[65] HT (vol. 1) p. 10. William F. Barry singled out this comparison for his especial mockery in his 1894 article "The Strike of a Sex": "Angelica . . . insists on being taught by a tutor – for she disdains a 'squeaking governess,' – and her knowledge is to be wholly masculine, Latin, mathematics, and pugilism. Is she not heavier, stronger, and more mischievous than her somewhat effeminate brother, Diavolo?" William Barry, "The Strike of a Sex", The Quarterly Review 179 (1894), pp. 289-318: p. 294. Barry was clearly uncomfortable with Grand's reversal of gender stereotypes.

gender".[66] The critique that Angelica's story directs at this social construction of gender is, if anything, intensified as she grows up to find that her once lenient parents, who did not have the energy to oppose her tomboyish antics when she was younger, suddenly insist that Angelica shake off what they see as her "whims", but what to her – and to the narrator – are the expressions of her natural character. Faced with the traditional prospect of (nothing but) marriage and child-rearing, Angelica complains bitterly that her parents should at least have trained her to fit the "groove"[67] (her expression for women's role in society) from the beginning, instead of encouraging her talent for music while she was growing up. In order to escape domination, and horrified by the examples of Evadne's and Edith's marriages to diseased military men, Angelica spontaneously proposes to an old family friend, whom she rightly judges to be clean living and moderately malleable, but despite the fact that he lets her do as she pleases,[68] as she had asked of him, Angelica remains unhappy about her lot in life and frantically searches for outlets. In this mood, she eventually decides to repeat an old childhood trick, and begins to impersonate her twin brother, who has been sent away to Sandhurst to embark on a military career.

Angelica's cross-dressing at first merely serves the purpose of rebellion, but it quickly becomes a chance to cultivate a friendship unbiased by gender stereotypes as Angelica meets and befriends, in the character of Claude or "the Boy", the Tenor of the cathedral of her home town. In terms of political message, the chapter entitled "An Interlude" is the novel's most poignant critique of traditional gender roles, since it pairs an obviously feminised man[69] with a woman whose cross-dressing remains undetected precisely because her natural attributes are those of a boy in the contemporary sense, or so Grand argues. Demetris Bogiatzis writes:

[66] Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 95.
[67] HT (vol. 2) p. 268.
[68] Cf. HT (vol. 2) p. 105.
[69] On the notion of the Tenor's femininity, cf. also Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 97.

> Angelica's successful assumption of a proscribed role indicates the monolithic nature of gender distinctions, exposing them as socially constructed cultural inscriptions that serve to perpetuate unequal power distribution and preserve the status quo.[70]

However, it is not just Angelica who successfully assumes a proscribed role. Although the Tenor is not strictly speaking in drag, it is clear from the beginning that he possesses a great range of feminine attributes which complement Angelica's masculine ones. Even at the very beginning of their acquaintance, for example, the narrator reveals that it is the Tenor's womanish "curiosity"[71] which leads him to cultivate the friendship with the Boy. When the latter makes him a personal compliment, he blushes and turns away, and in a rush of feeling the narrator recounts that the Tenor "threw himself down on the sofa, and buried his face in the cushions",[72] both of which are reactions which were more commonly ascribed to young women than to grown men. These reactions in the Tenor are explained by "the sensitive, nervous, artistic temperament"[73] he possesses, and also discerns in the Boy. The Tenor's physique is likewise feminised. "[H]e was not looking strong", the narrator judges, "his skin was transparent to a fault, and the brightness of his yellow hair, if it added to the quite peculiar beauty, added something also to the too great delicacy of his face".[74] In a discussion with the Boy, the Tenor recalls that he has been delicate since he was a young boy:

> I had been working in a colliery. The work was too hard for me . . . I was not one of them; my build was different, and I was quite unfit for such rough labour.[75]

Many years later, during the story time of the novel, the Tenor still finds physical work (such as drawing pictures) "fatiguing" and is often "obliged to . . . rest".[76] Nevertheless,

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[70] Demetris Bogiatzis, "Sexuality and Gender: 'The Interlude' of Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*", *English Literature in Transition (1880-1920)* 44.1 (2001), pp. 46-63: p. 54.
[71] HT (vol. 2) p. 179. The narrator does not gender curiosity in this instance, but the Tenor later reprimands the Boy for his "womanish" curiosity. HT (vol. 2) p. 216.
[72] HT (vol. 2) p. 198, HT (vol. 2) p. 200.
[73] HT (vol. 2) p. 219.
[74] HT (vol. 2) pp. 220-1.
[75] HT (vol. 2) pp. 238-40.
[76] HT (vol. 2) p. 187.

he sacrifices his nighttime rest[77] to entertain the Boy and works "in his garden early and late" to grow the Boy's favourite food. "[T]he Tenor ministered to this exaction with the rest",[78] as the narrator points out, because he finds pleasure in feeding and serving the dominant Boy. In this, as in many other cases, the Tenor's feminine patience and submission actually goad Angelica into increasing her domination and subjugation of him: as the Boy, she is almost as exacting and as neglectful of the Tenor's health as the binary husbands examined in the first chapter, and as in those marriage episodes, it is the submissive partner's display of feminine attributes which increases the dominant partner's abuse.

A direct comparison between the Tenor and the Boy occurs over the subject of dinner portions, and this comparison strongly suggests that both "men" are, in a sense, cross-dressing, or rather that both possess a set of attributes which they should not possess according to the binary code of the sexes. When the Boy asks the Tenor how many eggs he will have for dinner, the Tenor confidently claims he will eat six, and gently mocks the Boy for frying only three for himself. However, at dinner time he only manages three eggs himself. The Boy is "disgusted" at the Tenor's lack of capacity, but goes on to "preserve the balance of nature by eating the rest himself, a feat he accomplished easily".[79]

Although the example seems crude and the scene is easily overlooked, it is as good an illustration of Sarah Grand's stance on gender roles as any of the more elaborate discussions in the same chapter. The facts are straightforward: both the Tenor and the Boy estimate their portions according to the role connected with their biological sex, and both make a mistake. The implications, rightly considered, are more complex: the Tenor, who pretends to be a traditional man with a man's appetite, and who mocks

[77] The sacrifice of night hours is a characteristic strategy of complying female characters elsewhere, cf. for instance Rebekah in MtM and Hester Gresley in RP (discussed above).
[78] HT (vol. 2) p. 205.
[79] HT (vol. 2) p. 196.

the Boy for having a woman's appetite only, is in reality an individual who possesses a great number of feminine attributes, and eats accordingly, and Angelica, who estimated her portion to fit the gender stereotype of a girl, finds that among her many masculine attributes is a capacious stomach. The Boy ends up eating six, and the Tenor three eggs, and perhaps this scene is the more enlightening because of the Boy's casual remark about the necessity to preserve balance by making up for the Tenor's deficient performance as a man.[80] For that, I propose, is exactly the function of the impaired man: the Tenor's perfunctory performance as a man enables Angelica to develop her masculine side, a circumstance which is illustrated here rather graphically by leftover food. As in the case of the sickroom episodes examined above, the impaired man's deficiencies not only enable the protagonist to re-associate masculine attributes, but they almost force her to do so, which in turn partially excuses her usurpation of the man's role.

While the Tenor's femininity thus encourages Angelica's performance in the role of "Claude", his obstinate ignorance of her biological sex allows Sarah Grand to criticise society's perception of the binary code as natural and universal. The Tenor is often tempted to ponder the noticeable differences between the Boy and his "sister" Angelica, and always interprets such differences as the natural effect of their opposite sexes, whereas the readers' advanced knowledge constantly contradicts this conclusion. At one point, the Tenor muses:

> [t]here was never any devilment in the girl's face; it was always pale and tranquil, almost to sadness, as the Tenor saw it . . . Her movements were all made, too, with a certain quiet dignity that seemed habitual. In the Boy, on the contrary, there was no trace of that graceful attribute. He threw himself about, lolled, lollopped, and gesticulated, with as much delight in the free play of his muscles as if he were only let out to exercise them occasionally; and it seemed as if he must always be at daggers drawn with dignity. But such a slender intellectual creature could not without absurdity acquire the ponderous movements and weight of

[80] This idea of balance is one to which I will return in the conclusion to this chapter.

> manner of smaller wits and duller brains. In the girl, quiescence was the natural outcome of womanly reserve; in the Boy, it would have been mere affectation.[81]

The Tenor interprets both the boy's and the girl's behavioural patterns, which he observes at different times, as an expression of their opposite sex, when in truth both are masks worn periodically by the same individual: Angelica is not naturally quiescent but wears that attitude to church, and she is not a biological boy yet romps like one when she is protected by a wig. Provocatively, the episode suggests that Angelica's performance as a boy costs her very little effort (the change is external, a costume and a wig) whereas she finds her feminine persona laborious to keep up. Grand therefore broaches a delicate subject: when does Angelica actually cross-dress? When she arraigns herself in the external insignia of manhood to perform in a role which corresponds exactly to her natural character and disposition, or when she assumes the internal characteristics of a domesticated woman together with that woman's costume, both of which are exceedingly alien to her?[82]

In either case, Angelica's success as a cross-dresser depends largely on her knowledge of the attribute clusters connected to the binary concepts of girl and boy. She is highly aware of the expectations which society, and hence the Tenor, connects with these concepts, and uses this knowledge to manipulate his perception of her. Conversely, the idea that attribute clusters are arbitrary social constructions that can be used by cross-dressers to manipulate the perception of others, and that, even more importantly, attribute clusters themselves manipulate people's perceptions, is unthinkable to the Tenor before the Boy's accident undeceives him. He is fooled because he perceives no space for performance in the matter of gender. Although his own masculinity is noticeably feminised, gender roles – attribute clusters – are to him

[81] HT (vol. 2) pp. 185-6.
[82] The Tenor's nature of course raises the complementary question: when he presents himself to the world as a man, is he not in reality pretending to a status for which his nature does not qualify him?

natural, organic things, and his obstinate adherence to this belief is largely responsible for the duration of his delusion. Having first perceived the Boy as boy, he forthwith labours hard to bring all the conflicting information he receives during the period of growing intimacy (the Boy's effeminate features, his voice, "womanish" curiosity, preference for flowers, and so forth) into congruence with his erstwhile perception of the Boy as boy. He even falls prey to circular reasoning: "[t]he Tenor thought [the Boy's voice] hardly rough enough for a boy of his age, but it was in harmony with his fragile form, and delicate effeminate features".[83]

Noticeably, the Tenor's adherence to the traditional attribute clusters is as strict when it comes to the Boy's "sister". His infatuation with Angelica is built exclusively on the "pale proud purity of her face" and "the unvarying calm of her demeanour", which he takes to represent a delicate mind, purity – in short, a lady. Unable to perceive that "pale proud purity" might be a mask worn intermittently and at the individual lady's own discretion, he paradoxically holds his conception of Angelica's character to be superior to the Boy's, even though "Claude" continually assures him that Angelica is anything but "delicate-minded".[84] When she is discovered, Angelica condescendingly calls the Tenor "an unobservant and unsuspicious creature"[85] for having been deceived by her costume, but it is his binary world view that is primarily responsible for the duration and depth of his deception. Angelica conflates two binary categories between which no overlap exists in the Tenor's view of the world. In Nancy Jay's terms, he is a victim of the fiction of the "Principle of the Excluded Middle": insisting on the artificial incommensurability between a romping boy and a pale lady, he fails to see that the two categories, far from being oppositional, actually flow into each other naturally because they are in fact projections of the same nature.

[83] HT (vol. 2) p. 195.
[84] HT (vol. 2) p. 207, also the previous two quotations.
[85] HT (vol. 2) p. 276.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Tenor's discovery of Angelica's successful masquerade does not topple his world view, although by rights it should have done. Instead of readjusting his ideas to allow more fluency in the individual's display of attributes (a step that would presumably also help him to come to terms with his own femininity), he immediately begins to treat Angelica in the manner he reserves for typical binary women, and acts as if he had forgotten the knowledge he gained of the Boy's character and attributes.

> It was curious how the new knowledge already affected his attitude toward her . . . At any other time the Tenor himself might have marvelled at the place apart we assign in our estimation to one of two people of like powers, passions, impulses, and purposes, simply because one of them is a woman.[86]

In actuality, the Tenor would probably not have marvelled, since his acceptance of the binary code is very pronounced. Instead, it is Grand's readers that wonder. Ann Heilmann has pointed out that

> the theme of cross-dressing enabled writers to challenge patriarchal essentialism by exploding the category of gender. If women could exchange female and male costumes at will and 'perform' masculinity without being detected, then both masculinity and femininity were socially constructed roles, not inherent biological facts; there was therefore no justification for sexual apartheid in public and political life.[87]

Angelica's successful impersonation of her brother certainly suggests that Grand thought an explosion of the category of gender was necessary. The Tenor's femininity, on the other hand, because it is involuntary and constant throughout his life, complicates this interpretation of Grand's intention. It suggests an unconscious adherence to the idea of coherent, gendered attribute clusters, even as it advocates the possibility of a man being born with a feminine cluster, and vice versa.[88] Grand's conscious stance on this question, it would seem, is the Boy's heartfelt explanation that "the attributes of both

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[86] HT (vol. 2) p. 264.
[87] Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 106.
[88] I will return to this question in the conclusion, under the heading of "The Effects and The Limitations of Re-Association".

minds, masculine and feminine, perfectly united in one person of either sex"[89] is the definition of *genius*.[90]

Notwithstanding the fact that the Tenor's impairment – his marked femininity – helps Angelica's acquisition and refinement of masculine qualities, I do not read the Tenor as a positive character. I base this conclusion predominantly on his behaviour following Angelica's unmasking, which reveals the full extent of his traditional mindset. His reactionary attitude to the gender roles effectively contradicts the Tenor's alleged goodness, regardless of the narrator's intermittent protestations to the contrary. As Demetris Bogiatzis has argued,

> the Tenor adopts a decidedly conventional attitude toward gender boundaries. He makes a rigid distinction between masculine and feminine qualities . . . Indeed, his vision of Angelica is based on a received stereotypical model of femininity that he never questions.[91]

In my view, this rigidity contradicts his status as a New Man, although many critics have read him as such.[92] It is true that he commands the affection of everyone he meets, from the resident curate to the resident aristocracy, yet his idea of women's role is uncompromisingly traditional, and given Sarah Grand's marked dislike for Old Men, it is difficult to read the Tenor as an exemplary character. Especially during the aftermath of the episode, the narrator's commentary on the Tenor's attitude to the Boy/Angelica is strictly negative. For instance, the narrator ridicules the fact that the Tenor, like Arthur Brock (*The Beth Book*) and the poet ("A Regeneration of Two"), can reconcile himself to Angelica's transgression so long as he believes that she was motivated by passion,

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[89] HT (vol. 2) p. 209.
[90] It seems worthwhile to keep this definition in mind when reading BB, whose subtitle designates Beth as a "woman of genius", and therefore by Grand's own definition as a woman with "the attributes of both minds, masculine and feminine, perfectly united in one person".
[91] Cf. Bogiatzis, "Sexuality and Gender": p. 49.
[92] Stephanie Forward is convinced that "Grand's problem when she portrays the Tenor is that he is a wonderful person, but is not of this world; one fears for him from the very first – he is too good to live". Forward, "The 'New Man'": p. 440. While I agree that Grand faces a range of problems when portraying the Tenor, to me his goodness does not seem to be one of them. Cf. also, for instance, Naomi Lloyd, who suggests that "within Grand's theosophical critique of sexual binaries" the Tenor, like the twins themselves, represents "a harbinger of the day". Naomi Lloyd, "The Universal Divine Principle, The Spiritual Androgyne, and the New Age in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*", *Victorian Literature and Culture* 37 (2009), pp. 177-96: p. 189.

that her empowerment was checked by personal affection. The narrator rightly draws attention to the absurdity of a moral code that prompts a man to react with repulsion to a dispassionate interest in friendship, when he would have treated an overflow of passion with indulgence. Although the narrator on a different occasion claims that "if ever a man's soul was purified on earth, [the Tenor's] was; and if ever a man deserved to see heaven, he did",[93] I am inclined to see this praise as a conscious effort to conceal the critique that this chapter of *The Heavenly Twins* directs at society's blind adherence to the binary code. The Tenor is not per se evil, and yet his misguided perception of Angelica, which he does not adjust in the least, would have turned him into a "husband-fiend", rather than a New Man companion in the case of a union with her. This interpretation is given additional weight by the fact that the Tenor is not reinstated into a more traditional masculine role after Angelica's unmasking, but rather dies suddenly. To me, this suggests that Grand did not perceive him as equal to other New Man characters she has created, such as for instance Arthur Brock.

Notwithstanding the Tenor's exitus, *The Heavenly Twins* does glide into a period of recoil as Angelica, shocked by her recent experiences, returns to her elderly husband and to the traditional feminine gender role. As in the case of *The Beth Book*, this is a much regretted facet of the novel. Ann Heilmann, among others, is disappointed with this ending, which transforms Angelica from the most interesting character in *The Heavenly Twins* to a submissive (and largely silent) helpmate:

> [w]ith her entry into the male arena and her appropriation of a male role, Angelica effectively subverted the principle of masculinity. Now that the inevitable retribution has followed the act of 'castration' to which she symbolically subjected the Tenor, in the form of a death for which she feels responsible, she exchanges her mask of masculinity for that of a repentant, submissive and essentially sexual femininity.[94]

[93] HT (vol. 2) p. 256.
[94] Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 101.

What Heilmann refers to as "the inevitable retribution", I here call recoil. One may notice that the designation of agency varies between the two terms: in Heilmann's reading, "retribution" inevitably befalls rebellious characters, whereas in my reading, these characters often actively recoil to remove themselves from circumstances that they find unpleasant. This difference is quite crucial here, and I will pursue it in the following chapter. But even if one does not discern positive agency in Angelica's recoil and submission (or discerns it but reluctantly), I think it is appropriate to read her collapse into femininity as another one of Sarah Grand's "anaemic rags" for convention, insofar as this collapse is unable to efface the radicalism of the preceding episode of empowerment. For although some conservative readers might have been appeased by the protective strategy that informs this ending of Grand's "Interlude", the questions that Angelica's performance as the "graceful Boy" has raised are by no means answered by her return to feminine occupations.

I suggest that Grand sacrificed Angelica's individual freedom in order to turn her novel into the "allopathic pill" for society that she was envisioning *The Heavenly Twins* to be.[95] At the intersection of literature and politics, an individual character's happiness is perhaps a necessary sacrifice for the privilege of implanting in people's minds the idea that gender might, after all, be nothing but an artificial cluster of attributes randomly assembled. Angelica's story certainly has the potential to act with a time delay, just as Grand envisioned, since the character's return to conventional patterns does not actually touch on the issues caused by the feminine Tenor and the Boy, but rather ironically turns the reader's attention back to the crucial question that the "Interlude" had raised before Angelica's unmasking: is she cross-dressing now, or is she not?

[95] This description of the novel is Grand's own, it was used in the foreword to *The Heavenly Twins* in the editions from 1893-1923. Cf. Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward, *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand* vol. 1, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 404.

Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900, Lady Florence Dixie

Gloriana describes the life of Gloriana de Lara, a beautiful girl with a penchant for politics who has been sensitised to the issue of women's rights by the example of her mother Speranza, and who cross-dresses as a boy with the express aim of bringing about women's liberation. She adopts the name "Hector D'Estrange" and convinces her mother to send her to Eton. Like Angelica, Gloriana defies the conventional belief in sex-specific attributes through her natural connection to a range of masculine qualities. She excels both at Eton and later at Oxford by virtue of her brilliant mind, but is also – somewhat improbably – ahead of her schoolfellows in physical competitions such as sports and fistfights.

> [Hector D'Estrange] has taken the school by storm. Does everything tiptop. Splendid batsman, bowler, oarsman, wonderful at racquets, undefeatable at books – in fact, my dear, beautiful as an Adonis, and clever past expression.[96]

> [A] good many attempts were made to bully him, but he soon settled his tormentors, and gave one of them, a big overgrown monster, such a drubbing, that he never molested him more.[97]

Throughout the first part of the novel in which Gloriana, or Gloria as the narrator prefers to call her, poses as Hector D'Estrange, her grip on the attributes associated with masculinity is absolute. Hector regularly outshines biological men in a variety of fields which society considered to be the exclusive domain of men, such as rowing and politics. Ann Heilmann has written about the novel:

> [i]n contradistinction to the realist novel, which was wary of idealistic resolutions too far removed from contemporary reality, utopia provided an alternative space for the exploration of feminist fantasies of social and political transformation achieved through female masquerading. Since in feminist utopia female transvestism serves a political rather than

[96] Lady Florence Dixie, *Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900* (London: Henry and Company, 1890), p. 19. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: GL p. 19. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).
[97] GL p. 20.

> individual purpose, 'gender fraud' becomes a sign of heroism. This is the case in Dixie's *Gloriana*.[98]

However, even if the events of the plot are utopian, there is little reason to assume that the novel's critique of gender roles was not based on Dixie's actual beliefs.[99] Hector's comet-like political career, upon which he embarks immediately after leaving Oxford, affords several possibilities for including straightforwardly political arguments into the novel. For instance, in an article Hector writes as a schoolboy at Eton, he attempts to disprove the public's belief in sex-specific attributes:

> I confidently assert that where a girl has fair play, and is given equal opportunities with the boy, she not only equals him in mental capacity, but far outruns him in such; and I also confidently assert, that given the physical opportunities afforded to the boy, to develop and expand, and strengthen the body by what are called 'manly exercises,' the girl would prove herself every inch his equal in physical strength.[100]

In Hector's line of argument, the exercises that further "manly" strength are "manly" only in so far as they have been restricted to men. This restriction made the strength they imbued manly by conclusion, and not by nature: strength is a natural attribute of women that must be artificially withheld from them.

Another of the novel's comments on masculine attributes in women accompanies the ambitious Enfranchisement Bill, which Hector introduces during his first term as Prime Minister. The bill is supposed to establish the "mixed education of the sexes", the "extension of the rights of primogeniture to the female sex" (including the right to sit in the Upper House), and aims to open "all the professions and positions in life, official or otherwise"[101] to women. Hector's accompanying speech contains an

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[98] Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 102. Elsewhere, Heilmann refers to the novel's string of events as "Dixie's racy plot": Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 86.
[99] Dixie makes this clear when she addresses her readers in the foreword to *Gloriana* with the following lines: "[t]here is but one object in *Gloriana*. It is to speak of evils which *do* exist, to study facts which it is a crime to neglect, to sketch an artificial position – the creation of laws false to Nature – unparalleled for injustice and hardship". GL p. vii.
[100] GL p. 25.
[101] GL pp. 130-1.

interesting attack on the binary code in which he purposely forces the masculine attribute strength and the feminine attribute beauty into an alliance.

> Nature gives strength and beauty to man, and Nature gives strength and beauty to woman. In this latter instance man flies in the face of Nature, and declares that she must be artificially restrained. Woman must not be allowed to grow up strong like man, because if she did, the fact would establish her equality with him, and this cannot be tolerated. So the boy and man are allowed freedom of body, and are trained up to become muscular and strong, while the woman, by artificial, not natural laws, is bidden to remain inactive and passive, and in consequence weak and undeveloped. Mentally it is the same. Nature has unmistakably given to woman a greater amount of brain power.[102]

Weakness, according to this logic, has been forcefully introduced into the attribute cluster of the concept of woman. It is not a natural attribute of either sex, but rather is fostered in women to prevent them from becoming equal to men. However, the second part of Hector's argument is less egalitarian, for if women collectively possessed better "brain power" than men, any restructuring of society which accounts for this claim must perforce result in a reversed binary, in which the poles are exchanged, but the dependency and incompatibility of the partners remains the same.

Gloria's partner during her long cross-dressing episode is Evelyn "Evie", Duke of Ravensdale, Hector's unsuspecting best friend (and Gloria's secret love interest). Like the Tenor, Evelyn possesses a host of attributes conventionally associated with femininity, and it is his display of these attributes which makes him an excellent partner to Gloria cross-dressing as Hector. There is no struggle about dominance between them because Evelyn's natural dependence makes him lean on Hector's natural talent for leadership: the two preserve what Sarah Grand has called the "balance" in the outward sum of their attributes, and thus simultaneously cater to and perplex reader expectations.

Evelyn, although by nature "shy and reserved", follows his friend's political leadership unhesitatingly and can occasionally be "all fire" when talking about Hector,

[102] GL p. 129.

whom he loves with a "devoted, admiring love".[103] His name, which, according to Ann Heilmann, evokes the biblical Eve,[104] is a further indication of his feminine side. He is also in charge of his younger brother Bernhard (it seems the two brothers have no parents), whom he treats with motherly affection, calling him "dear" and constantly worrying about his health, and about not waking him.[105] In chapter V, Evelyn undertakes a spontaneous expedition to Whitechapel – because "the fit is on him",[106] as the narrator explains – where he is affected by the inhabitants of the district in a way which further suggests that his sensibilities are feminine rather than masculine. First he encounters a young couple sleeping in a barrel, and "with a half-sob"[107] asks the boy about their relation before giving him a few sovereigns. Next, the fate of a young prostitute brings tears to his eyes:

> [h]is heart is filled with a great pity; he feels that such sights as these are unendurable to him. He feels that he cannot face them . . . Heavy tears are in his eyes. "I must go home now," he whispers to himself. "I cannot see more".[108]

Contrary to Hector, who enquires even about the kidnapping of his mother "in a voice the very calmness of which fills [the observers] with awe",[109] Evelyn "cannot face" emotionally taxing situations and prefers to withdraw.

Like the Tenor and the Boy in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, Hector and Evelyn recreate a quasi-heterosexual setting in which Evelyn acts the part of the traditional woman. While Hector's unwavering determination is crowned by political successes, the leisured Evelyn creates an atmosphere of homeliness and relaxation to

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[103] GL p. 58.
[104] Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 104. *The Oxford Dictionary of First Names* notes that the name is derived from Norman French, and that "Aveline" was originally a woman's name only, which supports Heilmann's reading. However, since the name first reached England as a surname only, it was given to boys more often than to girls in the beginning, and hence became to some degree a unisex name.
[105] GL p. 60 ("dear"), GL p. 109 (concern for Bernhard's health), GL p. 108 (concern for Bernhard's sleep).
[106] GL p. 63.
[107] GL p. 64.
[108] GL pp. 65-7.
[109] GL p. 110.

which Hector withdraws to rest from his many duties, and to enjoy the company of Evelyn and of their "child", Bernhard. The Duke's study, where Evelyn has hung an oil painting of their first meeting, is "a room full of pleasant memories for Hector D'Estrange . . . They sit on alone together, these kindred spirits, happy in the communion of each other's thoughts".[110] It is in this same study in which Evelyn brings up the subject of his "unnatural" attraction to Hector, and thereby makes explicit his impaired status and the suffering which Gloria's empowerment causes him.

> Ah, Hector! if you were only a woman how madly I should love you; for love you as I do now, it can never be the same love as it would be if you were a woman.[111]

Interestingly, a short while after this veiled complaint of Evelyn's against his status as the feminised helpmate of Gloria's successful performance as Hector, the novel drastically and unexpectedly reverses their roles, and their relationship quickly approaches binary normality in what I read as an episode of recoil.

When Hector's true sex is revealed in a murder trial in which he stands accused of shooting his mother's ex-husband, Gloria abruptly ceases to be the agent of her own destiny, and instead becomes the passive object of Evelyn's protection. After she has been rescued from the prison van by an ally, the narrator explains that she is "handed . . . into Evie Ravensdale's safe keeping".[112] This surprisingly passive construction sets the tone for the latter part of the novel. Whereas Gloria as Hector proved herself capable of almost superhuman circumspection, the public discovery of her sex makes her surprisingly blind to her own danger, and she gladly leaves the

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[110] GL pp. 122-3.

[111] GL p. 124. Ann Heilmann has analysed the homosexual connotations of Hector's and Evelyn's relationship alongside those of the Tenor's and the Boy's in HT. She finds it "tempting to speculate that Dixie, a radical in feminist and social matters . . . sought to suggest that in a free society the social and political liberation of women and workers should be complemented by sexual tolerance". Consequently, she is prepared to read the above quotation as an implicit acknowledgment of the *possibility* of Evelyn's "impossible" love. Cf. Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 104. I am more convinced of the deliberateness of these connotations in Lady Florence Dixie's case than I am in Sarah Grand's. To this cf. also my discussion of the limitations of the concept of impairment in the conclusion to the fourth chapter of this work, esp. pp. 184-5

[112] GL p. 265.

organisation of her defence to her friends, with a surprisingly masculinised Evelyn leading the way. While others intercede on various political levels for her freedom, Gloria is alternatively hidden away, betrayed, discovered, kidnapped, bound, threatened, near-drowned, given over for lost, rescued, and brought back by various agents, but she has no hand in any of these proceedings. It is Evelyn, for instance, who chooses Gloria's hiding places. With the discovery of Hector's biological sex, the close friendship between Evelyn and Hector is transformed into a love relationship in which Evelyn, and not Gloria, fulfils the active part of protecting and acting for his lover.

Gloria in her turn revaluates a number of feminine attributes, a task which was hitherto fulfilled by her mother Speranza only. For instance, when she comes face to face with a girl that had betrayed her hiding place, she shows her "only kindness, forgiveness, and gentle words", and refers her to religion to save herself: "Léonie, God is good; He is our friend, He helps those who pray to Him. If we die to-night we shall be brought face to face with Him".[113] Notably, this is the first time in the novel that Gloria explicitly refers to religion, and whether Dixie thought of her character as silently devout or not, Gloria has certainly not relied passively on God's help while she was acting as Hector D'Estrange. It is only after her biological sex has been revealed that she begins to value quiet religiousness over decisive action, and consequently resigns herself to being rescued or to suffering in silence.

Ann Heilmann has interpreted the revelation of Hector's sex differently in her essay "(Un)Masking Desire: Cross-Dressing and the Crisis of Gender in New Woman Fiction". When comparing *Gloriana* to *The Heavenly Twins*, she argues that

> [s]ince the male costume inscribes social position and political power, the lifting of the mask does not spell demasculation . . . 'Hector', the mythological male mask which denotes great heroism but also tragic death, is shed so that 'Gloriana' can lead her women's army to victory.[114]

[113] GL p. 279.
[114] Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 103.

However, based on my reading of the novel, I would argue that instead of shedding her male mask to advance as a female leader, Gloria makes her masculine attributes (and consequently, her male position and privilege) actually die a hero's death so that binary normality can be reinstated. Although Dixie's narrator claims that abandoning her male disguise strengthened Gloria's position as the spearhead of the women's movement, the actual relocation of agency in the hands of Gloria's newly instated male lover reveals the extent to which even a radical utopian author was governed by the binary attribute clusters in her depiction of her novel's protagonist: as soon as she is officially female-identified, Gloria's radical self-assertion gives way to passive dependence on a male protector. In other words, where there is strength on one side, there must be weakness on the other: only in this way can one "preserve the balance of nature".[115]

The existence of a recoil episode is perhaps even more astonishing in this novel than it has been in the ones examined so far, for *Gloriana* is a utopia, and this circumstance would have given Dixie licence to fashion the relationship between her protagonists quite differently from preconceived patterns of relationship. Instead, she commits to a balancing act similar to the one in *The Heavenly Twins*, as she pairs the active Hector with the gentle and passive Evelyn only to exchange their roles in the partnership after Hector is discovered to be Gloria. This pairing keeps the binary code of the sexes curiously intact by reversing only the concepts to which the attribute clusters are attached.

[115] HT (vol. 2) p. 196.

Rather than undoing the gendering of these attributes by associating them haphazardly, the continued coherence of the clusters (Gloria as Hector is a “complete”, traditional man, just as Evelyn acts coherently feminine until Hector’s unmasking) actually suggests a reversal of gender roles much more than the dissolution of such constricting patterns. This is an effect of the impaired man which I will discuss here briefly, and to which I will return in the conclusion to this work.

The Main Findings of the Second Chapter

In this chapter, I have examined the concept of the impaired man in sickrooms and cross-dressing episodes in New Woman fiction. In both cases, the impaired man's reduced claim to masculine attributes gives the protagonist the opportunity to perform in a man's role, and in both cases, a renegotiation of the binary code of the sexes is achieved by contesting the notion that certain attributes are sex-specific. There are, however, a number of structural differences which differentiate the protagonist's re-association of masculine attributes in a sickroom episode from that of a cross-dressing episode.

The specific conditions of the sickroom – the imminent, serious danger to a man's life, and his temporary inability to avert that danger – achieve a reframing of the protagonist's ascension to power by suggesting that her digression from the binary code (her masculine behaviour) was inevitable in order to preserve her partner's life.[116] By severing the protagonist and her partner from the traditional set of values operating in their particular society at other times, the very act of usurpation, by virtue of these circumstances, thus becomes an act of serving the male partner. At the same time, in both of the examples considered above, the protagonist's usurpation of masculine privilege was embellished by feminine self-sacrifice (of a literal or figurative dimension). This circumstance arguably helped to reduce further the amount of aversion that Beth and Fruen, "these determined operators",[117] caused in traditional readers.

[116] In this connection, Michelle Rosaldo's differentiation between women's aspiration for power (which they often obtain, at least to some measure) and their aspiration for legitimated authority (which they rarely possess in any culture) can be read with benefit. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview", in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds.), *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), esp. p. 21. Intriguingly, the sickroom episodes examined here bestow both power and legitimated authority on the female protagonist during their duration, as the impaired man's failings give the protagonist's de facto usurpation of masculine power its (temporary) legitimacy.

[117] Oliphant, "The Anti-Marriage League": p. 139.

In the case of cross-dressing, this protective fiction of necessity and self-sacrifice is not given in equal measure. Although in the examples considered here, cross-dressing protagonists are paired with noticeably feminised men as well, these episodes do not provide a justification for the protagonist's behaviour equivalent to the one offered by the impaired man's sickness. Instead, it seems that Sarah Grand and Lady Florence Dixie both relied to some extent on the impaired man's femininity to mitigate their protagonist's transgression. This is possible, I suggest, because the impaired man's transgression in both cases predates, and therefore in part excuses, the cross-dresser's own transgression. The Tenor's passive and yielding nature coaxes Angelica on in her masquerade, and the curiously named Evelyn is a soft, gentle and passive man long before Gloria cross-dresses, and is happy to provide Hector with services that would have been deemed feminine by contemporaries, such as a homely atmosphere and an admiring and supporting love. In both cases, the protagonist uses the impaired man's feminine nature to further her own development in the opposite direction.

In conclusion, whether the impaired man is impaired by a temporary illness or by his feminine tendencies which are revealed through a cross-dressing episode, his "deficient" binary masculinity enables the protagonist to realise her full potential. Conceptually, sickroom and cross-dressing episodes therefore argue the same thing: that women can perform in masculine roles and functions, and that men can have a range of attributes commonly referred to as feminine. Both contest the idea that sex finds a natural expression in attribute clusters, and both protected this view, and the protagonist who voiced it, by pointing to the impaired man.

The usefulness of this protective function of impaired male characters is best illustrated by a brief look at a novel in which the female characters assert their authority exclusively against able-bodied traditional men. Such a process is perforce violent, because traditional men and protagonists who strive for emancipation effectively want

to occupy the same space in the gender binary – the traditional space of man. It is difficult to realise how much aggressive potential is hidden in the process of re-association, so long as one observes it only in novels that feature impaired men.

Conversely, in the 1890 novel *A Girl of the People,* written by L. T. Meade (Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith), all male characters are able-bodied and traditionally-minded. They are eager to suppress and to rule their female counterparts, and, throughout the novel, the ensuing battle over agency erupts in scenes of crass violence – sometimes instigated by the female characters, and sometimes by the male ones – during which one group outwits and subdues the other, but the sense of mutual compatibility which exists in the above examples between the impaired man and the empowered protagonist is entirely absent.

In the beginning of the novel, the protagonist Elizabeth "Bet" Granger is clearly in charge of her own life. She is introduced as "a tall girl, made on a large and generous scale".[118] She is "brave" and "astute", and her father grudgingly calls her "a strong lass, and a cute lass, and a cunning one", while one of her friends remarks that "Bet . . . when apprised of her danger, could fight her own battles".[119] Most of Bet's battles are fought with her father, a violent drunkard who torments his wife and younger sons, but is afraid of his daughter when he is sober, and physically weaker than her when he is not. Significantly, it is his wife's weakness and her adherence to the role of a binary woman which provokes Granger's worst outbreaks, while his self-assured daughter Bet generally escapes his wrath:

> [Granger] glared at his daughter with his bloodshot eyes . . . He turned his uneasy gaze towards the bed; he would vent his spite on that weak

[118] L.T. Meade, *A Girl of the People* (1890) (New York: Hurst and Company, year unknown), p. 5. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: GoP p. 5. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org)
[119] GoP p. 19 ("brave", also on p. 85 and p. 224), GoP p. 177 ("astute"), GoP p. 100 (strong and cunning), GoP p. 142 (able to fight her own battles).

> wife of his – Martha should know what it was to keep a man with a splitting headache waiting for his tea.[120]

As was the case in the novels examined in the first chapter of this work, a conscientious performance of the traditional feminine role actually increases the Old Man's propensity to ill-humour and vice, whereas Bet's self-assured opposition temporarily keeps her father's temperament in check. However, Bet's initial independence and strength suddenly vanish when she accepts an offer of marriage. Although her lover William Scarlett is a good man, the effect of his traditional approach to the gender roles on Bet is catastrophic.[121] His "eager masterful face" creates "a new timidity"[122] in her, and she loses her self-dependence and begins to rely on his protection. One could argue that, in analogy to the revaluation of feminine attributes examined in the first chapter, the curious overhaul of her character that reduces Bet from a "strong" and "cunning lass" to an emotional, fainting, and confused traditional woman is meant to endear her to Meade's predominantly middle-class readership.[123]

In any case, the agency over Bet's life does not remain with Scarlett for long, since he is unexpectedly locked up before his wedding for a crime committed by Isaac Dent, the man Bet's father wants her to marry. William's attempt to control Bet thus thwarted, Isaac then schemes to marry Bet himself, with the goal of "breaking her in",[124] but he is prevented from achieving this by Bet's women friends. Hester Wright, an influential slum singer, Mother Bunch (Molly O'Flaherty), an energetic matron who rules the Irish quarter of Liverpool, and Sister Mary Vallence, a social worker, capture

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[120] GoP p. 19.
[121] Although his object is to protect her, William Scarlett is as relentless in his pursuit of Bet as Isaac Dent, the novel's villain. William says to his cousin Hester Wright: "I mean to wed her . . . Ef [sic] she has a heart – and I know she has a heart – she shall give it to me". GoP p. 76. William's intention is to conquer Bet's heart, whereas Isaac is bent on possessing the physical woman, yet the terminology of war and conquest can be found in both Isaac's and William's wooing.
[122] GoP p. 125.
[123] This desire to transform an initially very masculine New Woman protagonist into a more relatable, because more traditional, version of herself might also have influenced Dixie's decision to weave Gloria into a strong binary context before the ending of GL.
[124] Cf. GoP p. 211.

Isaac Dent off the streets and subject him to a mock trial where Mother Bunch threatens to beat him until he confesses his crime. At the height of this violent episode, the annihilation of Dent's masculine superiority is so complete that Mother Bunch is described as brandishing her "powerful member in Dent's face", alongside Hester Wright's polite information that "Mother Bunch is the only policeman as has much power [in this district]".[125] This is an extreme and violent impairment of a man, yet its effect is similar to the episodes examined above: while the various men in *A Girl of the People* are reduced to the passive and submissive role of a traditional woman (either through incarceration or through kidnapping and binding), their female counterparts claim agency and perform in men's roles (as detectives, policemen, jailors, and even as executioners).

The brutality of the battle over agency which the female slum community wages with the novel's male characters is occasioned largely by the fact that the men jealously guard their position at the upper end of the binary, and have to be removed by use of force.[126] The impaired man, on the other hand, is unable to occupy that position. He does not challenge his partner, but (temporarily) settles into the inferior, dependent position of the traditional woman, and thereby allows the New Woman protagonist to step "into the place he had never filled",[127] as Priscilla Momerie reflects in Annie E. Holdsworth's *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*. In the novels examined above, the fact that her partner does not actively fight for his masculine rights but subsides into the

[125] GoP p. 265.
[126] Although it might well be argued that the violence of Bet's surroundings reflects her lower class status, or rather, Meade's use of this motif for her largely middle-class audience, it is telling that even the working-class protagonist Bet herself is carefully extracted from the jailing, kidnapping, threatening, bullying and banishing of male characters that shapes the novel.
[127] Annie E. Holdsworth, *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, SueAnn Schatz (ed.) in: Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (gen. ed.), *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899*, vol. 5 of 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), p. 49. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: YLHE p. 49.

feminine position with visible relief mitigates the protagonist's transgression.[128] Where this mitigation is lacking – as for instance in the case of *A Girl of the People* – women's ascension to masculine privilege not only occasions violence within the plot, but also threatens the process of familiarising audiences with these characters; they run the risk of being read as "mannish", rather than as "new", women.

At first glance, the conclusions of this chapter suggest that the fiction of the impaired man is as ingenious as the construction of a binary man to justify the New Woman's departure from the code, and to construct New Men characters. Yet there are a number of problems with this particular approach to emancipation. One of these suggests itself already from the analysis in this chapter, and can be summarised in a simple question: if impairment is such a brilliant protective strategy, why is it broken by recoil in all of the above examples? To answer this question, it is necessary to take a closer look at the phenomenon of recoil.

[128] Interestingly, Jennifer Beauvais argues that Lucy and Robert Audley in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) also lead "a battle for space, as they attempt to extend into each other's traditional spheres". Beauvais, "Between the Spheres", p. 22.

III. THE HEROIC MAN AND THE PHENOMENON OF RECOIL

In their essay "The Man Who Wrote a New Woman Novel: Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* and the Gendering of New Woman Authorship", Colette Colligan and Vanessa Warne collect contemporary as well as recent criticism of Grant Allen's notorious novel. While Allen himself was eager to present *The Woman Who Did* as New Woman fiction,[1] Colligan and Warne conclude that his "alliance with the women's movement" was shaky at best, and occasionally even met with "marked resistance".[2] One such critic who resisted was the contemporary suffragist Millicent Garrett Fawcett, who flatly declared that "Mr. Grant Allen has never given help by tongue or pen to any practical effort to improve the legal or social status of women".[3] Colligan and Warne's summary of the assessment of the novel by feminist critics suggests that his later readers were similarly uneasy with Allen's "self-posturing as a New Woman writer":

> [w]ithout exception, recent critics express dissatisfaction with the gender politics of Allen's novel, some insinuating that a man could but awkwardly promote women's social and sexual freedom.[4]

The question that motivates Fawcett's criticism, and which is raised by recent feminist critics as well, is one of authenticity: is *The Woman Who Did* a New Woman novel, or is it not?

The fact that many critics have expressed dissatisfaction with the text *as a New Woman novel* suggests the existence of a horizon of expectation, a fixed perception of the elements that a New Woman novel must contain, or the function it must perform, in order to be counted as "real". For Fawcett, Allen's work failed as New Woman writing because it did not help to improve the legal or social status of women, and later critics

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[1] Vanessa Warne and Colette Colligan, "The Man Who Wrote a New Woman Novel: Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* and the Gendering of New Woman Authorship", *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33.1 (2005), pp. 21-46: p. 22.
[2] Warne and Colligan, "The Gendering of New Woman Authorship": p. 26.
[3] Millicent Garrett Fawcett in a 1895 review of Grant's work for the *Contemporary Review*, quoted in Warne and Colligan, "The Gendering of New Woman Authorship": p. 29.
[4] Warne and Colligan, "The Gendering of New Woman Authorship": p. 22.

have focussed on Allen's failure to contest traditional gender roles (some, as Warner and Colligan suggest, even exclude him on account of his sex), but in either case, the question of whether or not *The Woman Who Did* "counts" as a New Woman novel seems to be of central importance to its reception.

In this chapter, I will examine three novels which pose a similar challenge to critics who would have New Woman writing conform to a relatively unified formula: Jessie Fothergill's *Kith and Kin*, Mary Cholmondeley's *Diana Tempest*, and Iota's *A Yellow Aster*.[5] Although all three contain elements with which the reader of New Woman fiction is familiar, such as a strong female protagonist who supports herself, they also contain elements that seemingly disrupt the familiar narrative, as did the episodes of recoil examined in the previous chapter. The difference between the novels examined here and those examined in the second chapter is one of degree, not of kind, and this circumstance complicates their classification as either "real" or "unreal" New Woman fiction. In my reading, the single most disruptive factor in all three novels is the positive depiction of Old Men, which sets these works at variance with all the other novels examined in this study.

The positive portrayal of male dominance which characterises *Kith and Kin*, *Diana Tempest*, and *A Yellow Aster* is severely at odds with the New Woman's wariness of male power and control which expressed itself so decidedly in the depiction of the binary male characters examined in the first chapter. To distinguish him from the binary man, I propose to call this type of male character the *heroic man.* Heroic men do not fit easily into the conception of the New Woman genre that has emerged since the 1970s. They are neither the tyrannical old husbands that the New Woman protagonist so often had to fight against, nor are they the impaired friend or lover against whom she could

[5] The idea of recoil and the heroic man can also be applied with benefit to a reading of the following novels: Lucas Malet's *Deadham Hard: A Romance* (Colonel Carteret) and *The Far Horizon* (Dominique Iglesias), Violet Hunt's *The Maiden's Progress* (Edward Lord Coniston) and *A Hard Woman* (Ferdinand Munday), and Arabella Kenealy's *The Marriage Yoke* (Sir Nigel Harland).

assert her power. Instead, it is precisely the heroic man's absolute superiority that attracts her.[6] This pleasure of being dominated frequently clashes with the beliefs and values expressed elsewhere in the same texts, and the resulting tension complicates an easy categorisation of these novels as New Woman fiction. Nonetheless, I believe it is crucial to read these novels, if not as "New Woman fiction", then as "fiction of the New Woman period",[7] for if we disconnect them from those novels commonly accepted as examples of the genre, the resulting lack of context impoverishes our understanding even of those exemplary works. As is often the case with this particular time period, it is towards the contradictions, and not away from them, that research must advance.

[6] The figure of the heroic male character may remind one of the type of character that Elaine Showalter has described as the "brute" in her chapter on "The Woman's Man" (Showalter, "The Woman's Man", p. 139.) However, as will become apparent in this chapter, the similarities between Showalter's "brutes" and the positive Old Men of New Woman fiction are superficial. The dominance of the "brute", Showalter explains, is frequently impaired before he makes a suitable companion to the protagonist (what Showalter refers to as "the blinding, maiming, or blighting" of men: Showalter, "The Woman's Man", p. 150.), whereas the type of male character I propose to examine here is attractive precisely because his superiority is never diminished.

[7] I use the term New Woman period here not predominantly in a temporal sense, but rather to suggest the prevalence of the idea of the New Woman during this time, and the possibilities this idea suggested to contemporaries.

Kith and Kin, Jessie Fothergill

Kith and Kin, Jessie Fothergill's fifth novel, was published in 1881 – two years earlier than *The Story of an African Farm*, which is sometimes considered the first New Woman novel.[8] By implication, the mere fact that *Kith and Kin* was published earlier than the genre's constitutive novel[9] thus becomes in some sense a barrier to its easy absorption into the genre. Neither do the bare outlines of the plot suggest that Jessie Fothergill was writing New Woman fiction with *Kith and Kin*: the novel centres on a courtship plot, and ends with a marriage proposal and the prospect of marital bliss.[10] Notwithstanding the fact that this short outline bears no similarities to the plotlines examined in the previous chapters as instances of New Woman fiction, *Kith and Kin* has recently been included in an anthology of New Woman writing.[11] Editor Brenda Ayres admits in her introduction to the novel that in all its reception history, "[n]one of the reviewers and no feminist work has identified *Kith and Kin* . . . as a 'New Woman' novel",[12] yet she confidently asserts that it "is just that".[13] Instead of reading *Kith and Kin* as a decidedly feminist novel which is in many ways exemplary of New Woman fiction, as Brenda Ayres has done, I want to draw attention to the novel's contradictory features. In my reading, *Kith and Kin* is a surprisingly unstable work. If it can be said to contain a New Woman "message", at the very least it is conflicted about that message, and constantly undermines its own value system by interweaving recognisably modern

[8] Here again, the underlying assumption is that a New Woman novel must fulfil certain minimal requirements to qualify as such, and that SAF was the first novel to do so. As has been discussed in the first chapter, I personally consider SAF to be an exceptional New Woman novel in many ways, and if forced to classify, I would call it a precursor rather than the first example of New Woman fiction.
[9] It was William T. Stead who argued that SAF was "the forerunner of all the novels of the Modern Woman". Cf. William T. Stead, "The Book of the Month: The Novel of the Modern Woman", *Review of Reviews* 10.1 (1894), pp. 64-74: p. 64.
[10] See the appendix for a more detailed summary.
[11] Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton, ed., New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899, 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010-2011).
[12] Jessie Fothergill, *Kith and Kin*, Brenda Ayres (ed.) in: Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (gen. ed.), *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899*, vol. 1 of 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), p. xxvi. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: KK p. xxvi.
[13] KK p. xxiv.

elements with elements that are unfamiliar to the reader who approaches *Kith and Kin* via Sarah Grand's or Mona Caird's work, for instance.

Among the features that resemble the work of other New Women authors is the novel's protagonist, Judith Conisbrough. Judith refuses to live in genteel poverty to protect her upper middle-class status, and counters her mother's objections with the angry retort that it would be "the whole universe higher" to work for her own bread than to wait for a good match. She explicitly compares marrying "in exchange for a home and clothing" to prostitution: "[a]ny girl out of the street can do that".[14]

A further parallel between Jessie Fothergill's protagonist and those of other New Women writers is the fact that Judith's character is interspersed with ostensibly masculine attributes. For instance, her cousin Bernard Aglionby calls her "relentless", and even claims that she has "unbounded power"[15] over him. When Judith takes up nursing to support herself and her family, Bernard refers to her occupation as "a task which would make a strong man recoil",[16] yet Judith excels in it. Her employer describes her as "physically strong and healthy, and in mind steadfast",[17] and after she has spent three years working as a hospital nurse, the narrator praises Judith's newly developed masculine qualities:

> [f]or the rest, one could see that she was in every way developed. She had more ease as well as more dignity of manner. She was more beautiful than before, as well as older; her face and form now more than ever were such as the most heedless could not fail to observe.
>
> There was a calm and settled power in [her face], not inferior, in its way, to that which dwelt in the countenance of Dr. Wentworth himself. The eyes were steady, scrutinising, and critical.[18]

It is worth noting here how carefully Judith's masculine traits (her power, her strength) are feminised by the narrator's description: although she has a power equal to that of her

[14] KK p. 59.
[15] KK p. 208, KK p. 290.
[16] KK p. 246.
[17] KK p. 240.
[18] KK pp. 264-5, KK p. 264.

male employer, it is of a different kind, and the narrator compliments the development of her physique not because Judith is now healthier and stronger (she is), but because her body has become more attractive from the point of view of the implied male observer. Likewise, Judith's lips are described as "steadfast, yet sweet",[19] as if the narrator was hastening to dispel the first impression by supplying a second, feminine adjective. This simultaneous display of traditional femininity and selected masculine attributes has been observed in the first two chapters of this thesis as characteristic of a wide range of novels whose "status" as works of New Woman fiction has not been contested. To this extent, the inclusion of *Kith and Kin* in an anthology of New Woman writing is perfectly justified.

In addition, characters who embody the old, unaltered notions of femininity and masculinity do not fare well in *Kith and Kin*. On the ideal of the "womanly woman", the narrator scoffs:

> [Mrs Vane was] the essence of the much-be-praised 'womanly woman', in the sense of not taking the most remote or elementary interest in any question outside personal, domestic, or family gossip. Advancing years had not made her more intellectual; the ardent hater of the 'strong-minded female' must have hailed Mrs. Vane as his ideal – no one ever had been able to accuse her of strong-mindedness.[20]

Mrs Vane's lack of "strong-mindedness" is compared unfavourably to Judith's presence of mind and her interest in politics. In addition, *Kith and Kin* contains a sharp critique of traditional masculinity, which is voiced by Marion Conisbrough, Judith's mother. Marion Conisbrough has lived her entire life under the brutal rule of her patriarchal uncle, and her opinion of Old Men is understandably negative:

> what *brutes* men are. Hard, gasping wretches! They keep us in slavery. They hate to see us free, lest they should lose our blind submission to them; I know they do. If we try to make ourselves free, they grind us to powder.[21]

[19] KK p. 21.
[20] KK p. 25.
[21] KK p. 65.

Brenda Ayres rightly refers to this monologue as "characteristic New Woman discourse".[22] In conclusion, both Judith Conisbrough's character and the narrator's attitude to traditional femininity and masculinity suggest that Jessie Fothergill was, on the whole, sympathetic to the burgeoning women's movement.

However, several aspects of *Kith and Kin* plainly contradict the picture which has emerged so far, namely, that the novel was a straightforward celebration of women's independence and professionalism. First of all, regardless of her conviction that working for her bread is a "whole universe" above marrying for security, Judith actually abhors the idea of nurse training and of moving to the city.[23] Before she accepts the training position in Irkford, the appropriately named "dreadful, smoky place", she says to her mother:

> [i]t would be hateful [to be a nurse], and I should loathe it at first. But I am able to do nothing else, and it is not an expensive trade to learn. It would earn my bread.[24]

Even after her employment has had nothing but positive effects on her, as the narrator has pointed out, Judith turns down her employer's suggestion to study medicine by saying,

> [d]o you suppose I became a nurse because I wished to do so? Not at all, and I never would have done it if I could have had a happier lot. I "took to it," as they say, because I was miserable, and wanted relief from my wretchedness; I did not like it then, and I do not like it now.[25]

As opposed to many of the protagonists examined previously, who longed to employ their talents usefully,[26] Judith's departure from her family home and her entry into the world of employment is not described as liberating, rather, it is the least terrible out of a number of terrible options, which she chooses only after rejecting all others. Her path to

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[22] KK p. xxx.
[23] By contrast, many New Women novels portray the city as the New Woman's especial habitat.
[24] KK p. 180, KK p. 59.
[25] KK p. 266.
[26] Of the novels I have examined here, the examples that immediately spring to mind are Angelica (HT) and Hadria (DoD). Note that Brenda Ayres suggests Judith likewise seeks employment because "she knows that she has brains and talents, and she does not want them to atrophy as they did for her mother" (cf. KK p. xxvii). I do not think the textual evidence supports this interpretation.

employment is accompanied by the anxious voices of well-wishers who seem to feel about the nursing profession as they do about a prolonged jail sentence. Her parson, in particular, expresses a strong aversion to her decision, and to the loss of status this step implies. He implores her to reconsider by pointing out that Judith will renounce her freedom by accepting a nursing position:

> it behoves you to think seriously and long before you take such a step – before you, a lady born and bred, leave your quiet home in this beautiful and healthy spot, to venture out into a great city, where you will have onerous work, which will have to be carried on in the vitiated air of the same city. Remember, you renounce your freedom, your independence; you bind yourself to absolute servitude, absolute obedience . . .

Instead of comparing the servitude of a professional nurse favourably to that of a wife, as she had done in the argument with her mother, Judith here assures her parson that she is fully aware of the scope of her degradation. "I have made no light decision" she says, "I came to it on my knees – through fasting and prayer – not from carelessness or love of variety".[27] This exchange makes it abundantly clear that seeking professional employment is hateful to Judith, and a burden she would prefer to evade.

In his article "The Psychology of Feminism" (1897), Hugh Stutfield draws the reader's attention to the fact that the idea of work as a key factor in women's liberation and emotional fulfilment was by no means uncontested among New Women writers. He compares Sarah Grand's conviction of the benefits of paid employment to woman's development to Mrs Roy Devereux's[28] opposing sentiment:

> Mrs Grand, among others, has maintained, with much insistence and great wealth of pathological detail, that a great deal of the unhappiness and the ailments of women are due to their want of occupation . . . As for Mrs Devereux, she simply laughs at the idea of any woman really loving work as an end in itself. "To say that she loves work better than liberty and leisure is a pathetic pretence . . . Surely the fact that the New Woman is always trying to persuade herself that work is a blessing when she

[27] KK p. 241, also the previous quotation.
[28] The direct quotation of Mrs Devereux in the following paragraph of Stutfield's article was taken from: Mrs Roy Devereux, *The Ascent of Woman* (London: J. Lane, 1896), p. 21.

> knows in her heart of hearts it is a curse, is one of the saddest of 'life's little ironies.'" Who shall decide when such eminent doctors disagree?[29]

Stutfield's characteristic tone of mockery notwithstanding, *Kith and Kin* makes a convincing point that some New Women writers considered work a scourge rather than a blessing. Judith's inability to see the positive aspects of her employment differs markedly from many other protagonists of New Woman fiction, but a parallel might be drawn to Ella Hepworth Dixon's Mary Erle, who likewise abhors the line of work into which she is forced by financial need.[30] The difference between Dixon's and Fothergill's New Women novels, I would like to argue on the following pages, lies in their contrasting construction of masculinity, and it is this element which in my reading most complicates the reading of *Kith and Kin* as New Woman fiction. Mary Erle is certainly no more inclined to earn her bread by hack-writing than Judith Conisbrough is to work as a nurse – neither character is newer, wilder, or odder than the other – but unlike Mary, Judith is eventually offered a way out of her dreary existence, while Mary faces London alone in the last scene of the novel. Many of the critics who have argued that the lack of a happy ending is characteristic of New Woman fiction[31] (Gail Cunningham refers to this as the "near-universal pattern in the New Woman fiction")[32] would perhaps argue that Mary's continued solitary existence *defines* her as a New Woman protagonist. Conversely, the fact that *Kith and Kin* ends with a wedding proposal might then be reckoned among the elements which set the novel at variance with the supposed "pattern" of New Woman writing.

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[29] Stutfield, "The Psychology of Feminism": p. 112. Note that Devereux's phrase "life's little ironies" is almost certainly a reference to Thomas Hardy's 1894 short story collection of the same name – the phrase was also taken up by Mona Caird in her introduction to her essay collection *The Morality of Marriage* (1897). I am indebted to Dr Mary Rimmer for drawing my attention to this.

[30] Cf. Ella Hepworth Dixon, *The Story of a Modern Woman* (New York: The Cassell Publishing Company, 1894), pp. 222-4. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: SMW pp. 222-4. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).

[31] For one of many examples, cf. Ross, "Female Education and the New Woman": p. 77.

[32] Cunningham, "He-Notes", p. 95.

Judith's love interest in *Kith and Kin* is her cousin Bernard Aglionby. He is the opposite of the binary "husband-fiend" examined in the first chapter insofar as he is genetically healthy and not inclined to torture animals, and he is the opposite of an impaired man insofar as he never once depends on Judith's help. Bernard is an industrious self-made man who has overcome various hardships and risen to prominence in the working-class district of Irkford. He is unaffected by illness of any kind and never loses his equanimity. Even a sudden inheritance that changes his social status from working class to landed gentry is unable to affect his ease of manner, and he navigates the country ballrooms of his new neighbourhood with the same ease that he had previously brought to bear on his working-class surroundings in Irkford. At the time of Judith's and Bernard's first meeting, he is engaged to Lizzie Vane, a pretty but somewhat silly girl of the working class, among which he was raised.[33] Bernard's vision of his future with Lizzie is highly traditional:

> [h]e would have liked dearly to marry [Lizzie] out of hand, . . . he would have been very proud of her beauty, would have lived in the utmost harmony with her, and she would never have interfered in the really serious concerns which were outside her sphere – in the business, the politics, and the statesmanship of life. In their mutual bark she was metaphorically to recline in the comfortable, cushioned cabin, with a novel and her fancywork, while he was to be the man at the wheel.[34]

This vision of marriage complies with the ideology of the separate spheres. In the context of a New Woman novel, one would expect this daydream of Aglionby's to evoke the narrator's criticism, all the more since Judith herself does not seem cut out for the role Bernard envisions for his wife (her sister Rhoda calls her "the politician of this family").[35] Curiously, though, it is not the New Woman who criticises Bernard for his traditional attitude, but his traditionally-minded working-class fiancée, who feels stifled

[33] Bernard is Judith's cousin and the rightful heir of his grandfather's property, but his father had been cut off after he made a love match, and Bernard was raised among the working class with no prospect of inheriting.
[34] KK p. 23.
[35] KK p. 49.

and oppressed by him.[36] In Lizzie's perception (and in hers only), Bernard's overbearing, traditional attitude actually turns him into the "husband-fiend" that other New Women protagonists tried their best to escape from. However, instead of criticising him for oppressing Lizzie, *Kith and Kin* reverses the situation by suggesting that Lizzie's inferior intellect was to blame for her revolt against his treatment:

> [s]he feared her master because she was incapable of understanding him. It was not a happy state of things. Looked at from Lizzie's point of view, she was a misunderstood being – a *femme incomprise*. And I am not sure that there was not a great deal of truth in her view of the case.[37]

This comment by the narrator is curious. At first glance, the suggestion that it is Lizzie's lack of intelligence which causes her fear of Bernard is insulting,[38] and especially in the context of New Woman fiction, the implication that tyranny is love misunderstood certainly has the potential to set the reader's teeth on edge. Although the narrator follows this problematic assertion with a conciliatory one (there is "a great deal of truth" in Lizzie's view), *Kith and Kin* still contrives to keep criticism of Bernard at a minimum by sketching Lizzie as a silly, frivolous, and mercenary cheat whose suffering, although presumably genuine, cannot possibly affect the reader much.

In addition, *Kith and Kin* suggests that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with Bernard's manner so long as he addresses it to the correct (intelligent, upper middle-class) woman. He does not change his manner perceptibly during his courtship of Judith, but in sharp contrast to Lizzie, Judith is capable of understanding his motives, and is therefore not repulsed by his behaviour. On the contrary, his conception of the marriage "bark" steadily increases in appeal to Judith during her three-year appointment

[36]Cf. KK p. 262.
[37] KK p. 227.
[38] This basic incompatibility of Lizzie and Bernard also suggests that Fothergill believed that class was, to some extent, genetic. Although Bernard has been socialised exclusively among the working class, his vision of marriage is decidedly middle-class, and, after his inheritance, it is Bernard who adapts effortlessly to the lifestyle of his late father, while Lizzie's giddiness and "low-bred" conversation embarrass him. For the class bias intrinsic in a wide range of New Woman fiction cf. for instance: Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 12.

as a nurse in Irkford. By implication, Judith learns to cherish traditional gender roles because she leads the life of a New Woman, and comes to hate it.

Judith's decision to begin nurse training is a direct result of a change in Bernard's fortunes, since he surprisingly inherits the estate which Judith believed would be hers. Their altered circumstances reverse Bernard's ideal of the "marriage bark": while he reclines in the luxury of his newly inherited country house, she begins to work for her bread. Although this episode is structurally similar to the episodes that I have examined in the second chapter, in that Bernard is prevented from helping Judith and must "recline" helplessly, while Judith works for her own support and experiences a period of moral and physical growth, a crucial difference lies in the fact that Judith herself does not feel in control of this change in their mutual relationship. In *Kith and Kin*, the protagonist *asks* her partner for his permission before she begins to work. The narrator says about that interview:

> [s]he had fought her fight, and she had been conquered; she had measured her will against that of Aglionby, and had very soon been reduced to falling on her knees and crying 'Quarter!' Had it been otherwise she would not have felt as she did now – would have been destitute of that sensation of calm, assured repose in a superior strength which outweighs the feverish joys of a hundred victories to souls like hers, at least.[39]

Judith's employment alters the couple's relative position for a period of three years, but there is no corresponding emotional change. Although the narrator frequently speaks of Judith's softening influence on her cousin, none of Bernard's subsequent actions or utterances suggests that he has grown more humble, and Judith is not empowered by her new situation in life. On the contrary, her emotional investment in the relationship increases in proportion to the sense of weakness she feels in confrontation with her cousin:

> [t]hough she was neither dependent, clinging, nor servile by nature, the very sight of Aglionby's dark face, with its marked and powerful

[39] KK p. 251.

> features, made her heart beat faster, and brought a crushing consciousness of his strength and her own weakness.[40]

"I was not wrong", she sums up her feelings for Bernard at one point, "He does delight to be the master – and perhaps I ought to have resisted – though I don't know why. One might easily obey that kind of master".[41] The crucial difference between *Kith and Kin* and those novels examined previously, then, is the fact that the New Woman protagonist of *Kith and Kin* finds a man to whom she submits "easily" and with pleasure.

When Bernard eventually proposes to her, Judith prefers marriage to a proud and domineering man to the position as matron of a hospital which is offered to her in recognition of her talents. This choice is not surprising in the context of the novel itself, but it is a decided contrast to the New Women novels considered so far. In *The Beth Book*, *The Daughters of Danaus*, *Red Pottage*, and *The Heavenly Twins*, for instance, the protagonist's desire to apply her particular talents outside the circle of her own home is part of the thriving force of her development; where this development is arrested by the interference of the binary man, the protagonist often either withers away (Hadria in *The Daughters of Danaus*, Evadne in *The Heavenly Twins*) or causes a catastrophe out of sheer frustration (Angelica in *The Heavenly Twins*). Lady Florence Dixie in *Gloriana* and George Egerton in "A Regeneration of Two" take great care to combine marriage (free love) with the protagonist's professional ambition in their utopian stories.

Directly contrary to this, one of the greatest boons of Bernard's proposal to Judith in *Kith and Kin* is the fact that it enables her to retire from service. In short, Judith voluntarily enters into the very position that other New Women protagonists start from: that of a dependent, ornamental wife of a country squire. My reading of *Kith and Kin*'s ending therefore differs substantially from that of Brenda Ayres, who argues that "Aglionby . . . comes to realize that he does not love a woman like Lizzie who is merely

[40] KK p. 131.
[41] KK p. 141.

ornamental . . . The transformed Aglionby has learned about the boundaries between a woman's entity and his".[42] However, Judith's answer to his proposal at the very ending of the novel does not suggest that Bernard will have to accept "boundaries" between him and his wife: "I must [marry you and decline the post], if you wish it, Bernard. You have made me wish what you wished from the first moment I knew you".[43]

Kith and Kin's plot solution is thus at odds with the denouement of the novels examined here so far,[44] and this solution hinges on the portrait of the novel's male protagonist. For the advantage that Judith has over those protagonists who began their journeys married to a "husband-fiend" is the fact that Bernard's masculinity is not tainted: he does not drink or gamble, oversee a lock hospital, or destroy a woman's reputation during the course of *Kith and Kin*. He is genetically healthy and sexually abstinent, a gentleman by instinct and a hard worker by training, and neither vain nor weak. This absence of flaws is precisely what differentiates him from the type of the evil husband who caused rebellion in other New Women novels. Although Bernard's understanding of the gender roles is highly traditional and thus potentially a source of agony for the New Woman protagonist, Fothergill seems to suggest that he has a right to demand submission since he is neither a diseased tyrant that Judith must rebel against to save herself, nor an effeminate man whose lack of power she must counterbalance by her own strength.

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[42] KK p. xxxi.
[43] KK p. 292.
[44] It is in keeping, however, with the denouement that Patricia Stubbs has identified as typical of Charlotte Brontë's fiction. Stubbs has argued that in Brontë's work "the overwhelming emphasis on the need to love and be loved finally submerges all the other essentially feminist issues – the problems of women's employment, their economic dependence, their restriction to a purely domestic range of activities and ambitions, the isolation of the self-supporting woman. All these problems are resolved, or rather simply disappear, on the marriage of the heroine . . . This collapse of her heroines' independence into welcome submission within the conventional marriage relationship … creates a serious rupture in the texture of the novels". Stubbs, *Feminism and the Novel*, p. 29. Despite the lapse of years between the publication of Brontë's and Fothergill's novels, this analysis fits the plot of KK surprisingly well, and the "collapse" is perhaps even more disruptive in the context of New Woman writing than it is for writing from the mid-Victorian period.

Accordingly, although the heroic man and the protagonist perform what seems like a ritualistic battle for power, the outcome of this battle is a foregone conclusion, and the protagonist's pleasure in gradually submitting to her lover is the focal point of *Kith and Kin* – the narrator at one point observes that Judith feels it is "delicious to yield unconditionally" and "to hear [Bernard's] wishes and obey them".[45] This depiction of the dominant man and the love affair complicates the assessment of the novel as New Woman fiction, and the same argument can be made for Mary Cholmondeley's *Diana Tempest*.

[45] KK p. 147.

Diana Tempest, Mary Cholmondeley

Diana Tempest was published in 1893, six years before Cholmondeley's most famous novel *Red Pottage*. Like *Kith and Kin*, the novel contains a number of elements that connect it to New Woman fiction, such as a focus on the protagonist's physical strength and a preoccupation with women's role in life and in relationships. Like Judith Conisbrough, *Diana Tempest*'s eponymous protagonist Diana "Di" Tempest has "strong hands"[46] which she uses to nurse and to help the weak. Cholmondeley twice stresses that Di is "on the exact level of equal height"[47] as her lover John Tempest, and when the cousins[48] first meet, the narrator comments that "the steady keen glance that passed between was like the meeting of two formidable powers".[49] This insistence on the protagonist's physical strength also characterises *Kith and Kin*.

A further parallel between the novels is the indictment of traditional power structures. *Diana Tempest* opens with a description of the binary marriage of the protagonist's parents, which like Marion Conisbrough's life offers a space for a critique of patriarchy. Cholmondeley's picture of the traditional marriage in *Diana Tempest*, which ends with the untimely death of Di's mother (who is also called Diana),[50] skilfully alternates between her husband's peevish complaints about his wife, and insights into the elder Diana's suffering during her seven years of marriage.

> Poor Di! Perhaps she too had had her dark hours. Perhaps she had given love to a man capable only of a passing passion. Perhaps she had sold her woman's birthright for red pottage, and had borne the penalty, not with an exceeding bitter cry, but in an exceeding bitter silence. Perhaps she

[46] Mary Cholmondeley, *Diana Tempest* 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1893), (vol. 1) p. 134. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: DT (vol. 1) p. 134. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).
[47] DT (vol. 1) p. 150.
[48] On paper, John Tempest is Diana Tempest's first cousin. Actually, since he is illegitimate, they are not related at all.
[49] DT (vol. 1) p. 150.
[50] This is not a bad premise for a New Woman novel, because it suggests the possibility of correcting, to some extent, the Old Woman's mistakes through the actions of the New Woman, the younger Diana. This is indeed what Di's grandmother hoped to achieve by raising her granddaughter differently from her daughter.

> had struggled against the disillusion and desecration of life, the despair and the self-loathing that go to make up an unhappy marriage. Perhaps in the deepening shadows of death she had heard her new-born child cry to her through the darkness, and had yearned over it, and yet – and yet had been glad to go.[51]

Di's father Colonel Tempest, on the other hand, styles himself as the misunderstood victim of his capricious wife.

> She might have made anything of him, he reflected . . . She had not taken him the right way. She had been unable to effect a radical change in him, to convert weakness and irresolution into strength and decision; and he had been quite ready to have anything of that sort done for him.[52]

Inspired by the tragedy of her mother's life, Di's condemnation of traditional marriage is uncompromising at the beginning of the novel, and when her friend Madeleine Thesinger makes a mercenary match, Di is aflame with opposition.[53] "I wonder if there is anything in the whole wide world so recklessly imprudent as a prudent marriage?" she remarks to her grandmother Mrs Courtenay, and compares a loveless marriage to "voluntary death in life, from which there is no resurrection".[54] In her discussion of Madeleine's marriage Di also touches on the question of women's role in life, which was so crucial to the women's movement: "I wish there was something one could be between an old maid and a married woman" she muses, but is unable to think of a role unconnected to men: "I think if I had my choice I would be a widow".[55]

Although Di is portrayed as an intelligent woman who is critical of women's role in a traditional marriage, she is at times perturbed by what she perceives as the modernity of her own feelings. Her grandmother likewise worries that her enlightened convictions may have made Di incapable of loving at all, and this thought disturbs them both severely. Di herself is frustrated by her inability to overlook her suitors' faults and

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[51] DT (vol. 1) pp. 18-19.
[52] DT (vol. 1) p. 6 Colonel Tempest's failure as a husband and father is not accounted for by any of the faults which characterised binary masculinity, but is instead accredited to his inherent weakness and irresolution. This type of male character will be the subject of the fourth chapter.
[53] Cf. DT (vol. 1) pp. 88-113.
[54] DT (vol. 1) p. 130, DT (vol. 1) p. 137.
[55] DT (vol. 1) p. 162.

by her abhorrence of what society calls a happy marriage,[56] and at the ending of the novel, when she has fallen in love with her cousin, Mrs Courtenay reveals that she had been afraid Di's masculine independence and freedom, as well as her critical attitude towards the traditional gender roles, had made her too unwomanly to feel and to excite love:

> I thought you valued your own freedom and independence too much to marry. It is difficult to advise the young to give their love if they don't want to. Yet, as one grows old, one sees that the very best things we women have lose all their virtue if we keep them to ourselves. Our love if we withhold it, our freedom if we retain it, – what are they later on in life but dead seed in our hands? Our best is ours only to give. Our part is to give it to some one who is worthy of it.[57]

Mrs Courtenay's praise of conventional marriage and sacrifice ("[o]ur part is to give") does not erase the negative portrayal of traditional marriage that characterises the early parts of the novel. However, her position on women's duties and remunerations resembles the arguments of critics of the women's movement rather than those of its supporters, and her theory that women's highest aim in life was to choose the right husband (as opposed to choosing between a husband and a profession, or between professions) remains uncontradicted in argument, and is actually confirmed by the novel's plot solution, in which a heroic man relieves Di of the necessity of making a life choice that does not involve marriage.

As in *Kith and Kin*, the protagonist's love interest, John Tempest, is a dominant man whose traditional attitude towards the gender roles is defused by his individual goodness. His strength and self-dependence are continuously emphasised: even as a child, John possesses a "stoic calm", and the narrator remarks that he "would have been bullied more than he actually was had he not been so strong and so impossible to convince of defeat".[58] Descriptions of John Tempest often border on hyperbole. His

[56] Cf. DT (vol. 2) pp. 10-11.
[57] DT (vol. 3) pp. 104-5.
[58] DT (vol. 1) p. 178, DT (vol. 1) p. 186.

mind is "as tenacious of impression as engraved steel", he has a jaw-line "square enough to suggest any amount of reserved force", and his "intense love of justice and rectitude" and indomitable "pride of race"[59] elevate him over the Colonel's and his son's neglect for their honour as Tempests. This is an interesting detail which further sets *Diana Tempest* apart from novels which are commonly recognised as examples of New Woman fiction, since "pride of race" does not usually appeal to the New Woman protagonist.[60]

The novel's courtship plot bears surprising similarities to *Kith and Kin*'s. Like Judith, Di is immediately fascinated by her cousin, even while she is apprehensive about the degree of his mental and physical strength, which surpasses her own. Like Judith, she struggles against John's domination over her own wishes for a while, but ultimately submits and experiences a sensation of calm and rest which then forms the core of her fascination with him. Another parallel to *Kith and Kin* is the fact that the positive valuation of the heroic man's actions and interactions with the protagonist often seem to clash with several of the more progressive arguments which have been raised in the earlier parts of the novel. The following excerpt forms a part of the description of their courtship:

> [Di's] whole being rose up against him in sudden passionate antagonism horrible to bear. And all the time she knew instinctively that he was stronger than she. John saw and understood that mental struggle almost with compassion, yet with an exultant sense of power over her.[61]

It is important to remember that the reader is supposed to be on John's side in this power struggle. Although the protagonist and the narrator have spoken out against male domination, and this is clearly an instance of male domination, the scene is not

[59] DT (vol. 1) p. 210 ("engraved steel"), DT (vol. 1) p. 214 ("reserved force"), DT (vol. 1) p. 237 ("love of justice"), DT (vol. 1) p. 234 ("pride of race").
[60] In many New Women novels, "pride of race" is indicative of a tendency to inbreed for purity's sake, and the dangers of inbreeding are addressed, among others, in MB and ASW. Pride of race (indeed, it is suggested, pride of a family affinity to cruelty and murder) spoils WoA's binary man Philip Dendraith.
[61] DT (vol. 2) p. 194.

supposed to convey a feeling of alarm. Just as Bernard's marriage proposal in *Kith and Kin* allowed Judith to retire from a position which she found hateful, so John's aggressive wooing releases Di from her apprehensions about her heartlessness, and, in both cases, the resulting relationship allows the protagonist to rest from her struggle with certain of the elements which New Women writers portrayed as inevitable parts of the life of intelligent late nineteenth-century women. It is precisely Di's modern attitude to love and to relationships which makes her "odd" and incompatible, and from which she therefore craves respite.

It is important to bear in mind that the separation line between the novels examined here and other, more straightforwardly "new" novels is at best an artificial aid for the momentary separation of a body of work which does not, in my view, support this separation for purposes other than the examination of individual characters. The novels examined in the previous chapter, although they contain episodes of gender role reversal, all end in an episode of recoil that returns the protagonist and the formerly impaired man to a traditional, readable binary code – in *Diana Tempest*, as well as in *Kith and Kin*, this is the function of the heroic male character as well. Conversely, *Diana Tempest* occasionally toys with the idea of impairment, but ultimately forgoes it in favour of emphasising John's power and strength. These elements – the impaired man and the feeling of empowerment, the heroic man and the feeling of security – flow into each other more than my separate discussion of them here suggests.

In *Diana Tempest*, the heroic John Tempest is impaired by accidents on several occasions, but the narration either uses these instances of reduced physical strength as examples of John's superior mental strength, or otherwise defuses them. When John faints in front of his cousin after having been maimed in a fire, for instance, the narrator relates the episode entirely from his clouded point of view, and thereby considerably diminishes Di's empowerment by transferring agency from her onto a teacup.

> He drank the tea mechanically without troubling to hold the cup, which seemed to take the initiative with a precision and an independence of support, which would have surprised him at any other time. The tea, what little there was of it, was the nastiest he had ever tasted. It might have been made in a brandy bottle. But it certainly cleared the air. Gradually the room came back . . . There was Di sitting opposite him, evidently quite unaware that he had been momentarily overcome.[62]

When John realises that he did in fact faint, he is deeply ashamed and calls himself a "poor deluded, blinded, bandaged idiot".[63] However, John's confinements are not due to any personal weakness, but to an elaborate plot on his life which was instigated by Colonel Tempest, the disappointed heir of the Tempest estate. The fact that John has survived multiple attempts on his life not only annoys the conspirators, but also lends him an air of invulnerability, and contradicts the above self-accusations. Furthermore, even in his weakest hour, the narrator is careful to convey a certain expression of John:

> [h]e looked, as he lay back in his low couch, a strange mixture of feebleness and power. It was as if a strong man armed kept watch within a house tottering to its fall. He put out his muscular, powerless hand, and took up one of the telegrams.[64]

A comparison of this description with that of Arthur Brock in *The Beth Book* in his sickness will quickly reveal the differences in Fothergill's and Grand's portrayal of their male protagonists as patients.

Another potential threat to John's dominance is his illegitimacy, which he discovers towards the end of the novel. After some inner turmoil, he informs the rightful heirs (Colonel Tempest and his son Archibald, Di's older brother) and abandons his hopes of marrying Di, until her brother is killed in a case of mistaken identity, and her father dies of shock immediately afterwards, whereupon the property John had formerly thought was his devolves upon Di, who immediately hands it back to John. Convoluted as this plot may be, it hints at the element of pleasure in the submission of the protagonist to the heroic man, for when she finds that her lover is suddenly penniless

[62] DT (vol. 2) pp. 20-1.
[63] DT (vol. 2) p. 34.
[64] DT (vol. 1) p. 287.

and nameless while she herself has become the rightful heir of the Tempest estate, Di immediately restores the original binary balance by suggesting to John that he suggest marriage. Instead of using John's temporary impairment to emancipate herself through the display of masculine attributes, as the protagonists examined in the previous chapter do, Di wholeheartedly prefers to submit to a dominant lover, even though she herself must (re-)create that dominance in him. It is this outspoken preference for the old patterns of relationship which complicates the reading of *Diana Tempest* as New Woman fiction. This preference can also be found in Iota's *A Yellow Aster*, whose protagonist is cured from her inability to feel by the courtship of a flawless heroic man.

A Yellow Aster, Iota

Iota (Kathleen Mannington Caffyn) is generally counted among New Women novelists[65] despite the fact that she opposed women's suffrage. As one might expect from this contradiction, the categorisation of her most successful novel *A Yellow Aster* as a New Woman novel has not gone uncontested.[66] As in the case of the previous two novels, a case could be made for both sides of the argument: *A Yellow Aster* is neither strictly traditional, nor straightforwardly modern in its attitude to the gender roles. Like *Kith and Kin* and *Diana Tempest*, it introduces a heroic man in the person of Humphrey Strange, whose love, albeit domineering, is cherished by the protagonist and ultimately brings about her salvation. In addition, the novel is harsh in its condemnation of masculine women, such as the protagonist's mother. On the other hand, it praises a number of masculine attributes in its protagonist Gwen Waring: the narrator emphasises that she has a "strong nature",[67] and that she and her later husband Humphrey Strange are "intellectual companions".[68] Humphrey's summary of Gwen's character before he proposes to her is "[s]he's hard – hard as nails",[69] which is a positive assessment, since Gwen is the first woman Humphrey is interested in marrying.

A Yellow Aster also addresses a range of sentiments and circumstances peculiar to the New Woman movement, such as Victorian marriage laws. After Gwen has decided to marry Humphrey Strange "as an experiment" although she does not love

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[65] A. R. Cunningham, for instance, commented on the "novelists of the purity school – Grant Allen, Sarah Grand and 'Iota'" in 1973. Cunningham, "New Woman Fiction": p. 180. The distinction of New Woman fiction into the purity and the neurotic school was first undertaken by Hugh Stutfield (who used the term "Sarah Grandian school" to describe purity novelists in "The Psychology of Feminism" in 1897). It is perhaps not to the credit of the "purity school" that the seriousness of two of its most prominent authors – Iota and Grant Allen – has been discussed controversially by many critics. Cf. for instance Warne and Colligan, "The Gendering of New Woman Authorship": p. 21. In the context of this thesis, I have not found the distinction into "puristic" and "neurotic" novels helpful, and therefore do not employ it.
[66] Kate Flint, for one, speaks against it: Flint, *The Woman Reader*, p. 259.
[67] Iota, *A Yellow Aster* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1894), p. 168. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: AYA p. 168. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).
[68] AYA p. 117.
[69] AYA p. 118.

him, she is appalled when she realises that marriage has given her the legal status of Humphrey's "chattel" and describes her marriage as "bondage worse than death".[70] Occasionally, she takes off her wedding ring and fancies herself unmarried again:

> "I am free, free!" she cried, "my body is my own again, and my soul, and my brain! I am myself again, Gwen Waring, a self-respecting creature, with no man's brand on me – ".[71]

Gwen's intense frustration with her dependent status and her assessment of the degradation inherent in the legal position of a wife under Victorian marriage legislation reiterate a common theme of New Woman writing.

The stereotypical Old Woman also receives a fair measure of ridicule in *A Yellow Aster*, as she did in *Kith and Kin*: "[i]t is a wretched thing, generally, for a woman to be absolutely untireable", Gwen explains to Humphrey after their wedding, because

> [a] very strong woman is docked of half the privileges of her sex. If you notice the stock, devoted husband, he has always a sickly creature of a wife to devote himself to – or one who poses as sickly – or if her body isn't sickly her brain is. You hardly ever find a woman quite sound in wind and limb and intellect, with an absolutely unselfish husband, ready to think all things for her, and to dance attendance on her to all eternity. Helplessness is such supreme flattery. I tell you, the modern man doesn't like intellect, any more than his fathers before him did, if it comes home too much to him.[72]

Whereas the ideology of the separate spheres suggests that all women possess feminine attributes, and none possesses masculine ones, Gwen maintains that only a limited number of women naturally possess "feminine" weakness (which attribute can accordingly not be called feminine in any but a conventional sense), and that a wide range of women who are not naturally weak nevertheless feign weakness to comply with men's expectations, and to obtain the benefits traditionally bestowed on weak women. This sentiment is in keeping with, for instance, the one expressed in the

[70] AYA p. 129 ("experiment"), AYA p. 247 ("chattel"), AYA p. 234 ("bondage").
[71] AYA p. 168.
[72] AYA pp. 163-4.

"Interlude" of Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, where Angelica's temporary compliance with the traditional gender role during church services was likewise a matter of choice and skilful performance.

However, since the plot of *A Yellow Aster* portrays Gwen's modern sentiments as the root of her marital and personal unhappiness, and celebrates her transformation into a traditional womanly woman and mother, it is difficult to include Iota's bestseller in the genre of New Woman fiction without reservations. Gwen's strength and self-reliance are side effects of her unusual education by dangerously quixotic parents, and are presented throughout the novel as impairments to her happiness, and accordingly, the curbing of these unpleasant outgrowths of her modern mindset make up the entire plot of the novel. As in *Diana Tempest*, the fear that greater equality would render women unfit for love and motherhood is a central concern in *A Yellow Aster*, whose very title alludes to the freakish nature that Gwen must learn to leave behind.

This message is reinforced by the portrait of the marriage of Gwen's parents Grace and Henry. To the dispassionate reader of *A Yellow Aster*, the two scientists initially seem like an ideal match in every respect except parenting: they love and support each other, successfully collaborate on a number of scientific projects, and although they have become curiously alike, there is no lack of attraction between them. However, the novel's later development reveals that Grace's and Henry's harmonious sameness stems from Grace Waring's insufficiently developed "natural" womanhood, which in *A Yellow Aster* means her maternal instinct.[73] After Grace has dedicated a lifetime to scientific progress, her daughter's marriage suddenly catapults her into a

[73] The novel's defence of naturally sex-specific attribute clusters is not reason enough to exclude AYA from the genre. George Egerton, for instance, similarly believed in "genetic woman": George Egerton, *The Wheel of God*, Paul March-Russell (ed.) in: Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (gen. ed.), *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899*, vol. 8 of 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p. 51. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: WoG p. 51. Various other New Women writers likewise upheld the differences between men and women, rather than arguing against sex-specific attributes. Here, as in the cases of *Kith and Kin* and *Diana Tempest*, I believe it is mainly the positive portrait of traditional masculinity which complicates the novel's inclusion in the genre, not its adherence to traditional attribute clusters per se.

state of mourning over her lost motherhood, although she was positively frightened by her own children when they were little. This late awakening cancels out Grace's intellect, and since she withdraws from her husband, spells his doom as well as hers.

Yet the novel's message, which is reinforced in the story of Grace's daughter Gwen, unabashedly holds that a "functioning" maternal instinct is necessary for a fulfilled life as a woman. During Grace's intellectual stage, her acquaintances heap scorn upon her head. She is denounced and taunted as "that inhuman little mother" and an "eerie little creature".[74] When Mr Fellowes, the couple's parson, discusses the Warings' decision to raise their children without religious teaching, he says: "[u]nder some conditions this experiment of the Warings might prove a success" but his wife Ruth interjects: "but with that mother!" and Mr Fellowes confirms: "yes, that alters the whole aspect of affairs!"[75] Likewise, as long as Grace is happy and content with her role as a scientist, Ruth Fellowes is one of her sharpest critics,[76] but when Grace disintegrates into a guilt-ridden, depressed shadow of her former self because of her late-onset maternal instinct, Ruth suddenly begins to shower Grace with pity and consideration, thereby confirming that although Grace is now suffering pointlessly, she is redeeming herself in the eyes of society by permitting her "true" (binary feminine) nature to assert itself.

Likewise, it is only in the abandonment of (Iota's interpretation of) her New Woman convictions that the protagonist herself finds happiness. Gwen's independence and self-reliance are singled out as the cause of her coldness, and consequently not valued positively in *A Yellow Aster*, all the more since Gwen's desire for freedom and

[74] AYA p. 27. Note that although the Warings are sometimes dealt with summarily as a weird couple, it is never Henry's scientific approach to life that is perceived as "unnatural" or "inhuman", the fault always lies explicitly with Grace.
[75] AYA p. 24.
[76] John and Ruth are a traditional couple, and their marriage functions as the ideal against which the shortcomings of the Waring's marriage are revealed. Mrs Fellowes is also the source of such choice gems as "a woman's crown of glory comes through her heart, or it isn't worth the wearing" (AYA p. 79) and "[t]he head and front of a woman's life is love – God's, and mother's, and man's". (AYA p. 79).

independence almost results in the death of her husband Humphrey Strange, the novel's heroic man, on whom the reader's sympathies are concentrated throughout, as they were on the heroic men in *Kith and Kin* and *Diana Tempest*.

Like the male protagonists of those novels, *A Yellow Aster*'s heroic man is self-reliant and inspires a feeling of inferiority in the protagonist which she finds at first disturbing, but which later becomes the mainstay of her passion for him. Humphrey Strange's power over the protagonist is just as absolute as that of any binary husband discussed in the first chapter, but his personal restraint causes him to control his power instead of abusing it. Nevertheless, the confrontation with the headstrong, modern Gwen often leads to situations in which Humphrey's traditional approach is made explicit, and these glimpses of his world view are disconcerting. Consider his train of thoughts after he has been married to Gwen for a few months and is frustrated by her lack of emotion:

> "[i]f I boxed her ears," he thought, "I wonder what she would do or say? . . . I have a good mind to try – if her ears weren't altogether so perfect I swear I would. Ah, my good girl, you are playing with fire! . . . There may come a time, little fool, when I may get tired of this game, and resort to active measures, and then you'll find your bit of hell".[77]

The level of violence that Humphrey fantasises about here is comparable, I would argue, to Philip Dendraith's assaults on Viola Sedley in Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael*,[78] yet although Humphrey contemplates violating Gwen, calls her a fool, and relegates the crisis of her life to the status of a "game", the author condones his view because Humphrey's individual character exempts him from the reproach levelled against diseased Old Men.

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[77] AYA p. 211.

[78] Mona Caird's 1889 novel deals with the topic of marital violence and rape. The comparison between Humprey Strange and Philip Dendraith may seem inappropriate with regard to their actions, but I would argue that their respective attitudes to the protagonist's desire for freedom are indeed comparable.

In like fashion, the novel's plot solution seemingly calls into question the critique of Victorian marriage law: when Gwen realises after much agony that she is actually in love with her husband, the feeling of degradation that had plagued her suddenly disappears. But in reality it is solely Humphrey Strange's exceptional personality that enables Gwen to recover from her "experiment" of marrying him without being in love. If he were not such an uncommonly perfect specimen, Gwen's marriage would indeed have been "worse than death",[79] as none of the outward factors of her marriage are altered during the novel, and it is only Humphrey's restraint – not society and not the law – which protects her from being violated.

In conclusion, a case can be constructed for both the inclusion of Iota's most famous novel in the genre of New Woman fiction, and for its exclusion from this genre. On the one hand, Gwen complains that the binary code forces strong women to act weak in order to be appreciated, and her opinion is offered as a valid point – neither the narrator nor Humphrey, to whom the complaint is addressed, opposes her point of view. On the other hand, the novel's plot proves that Gwen is not appreciated, and does not even appreciate herself, until she learns how to act like a traditional wife and mother. The fiction of the heroic man further complicates the novel's status: although Gwen is a modern woman in the beginning, she experiences submitting to her husband's dominance as pleasant, and it is this submission which cures her of her "oddity", which in the novel's terms is a by-product of her modern convictions. Gwen's acceptance of her binary role unsurprisingly turns her from an incompatible yellow aster into an ordinary, and happily mated, "cabbage rose".[80] Like *Kith and Kin* and *Diana Tempest*, *A Yellow Aster* thus combines elements which are easily recognisable as "new" with a plot solution that seems to recoil from this same newness to a degree which surpasses the recoil episodes analysed in the previous chapter.

[79] AYA p. 234.
[80] AYA p. 166.

The Main Findings of the Third Chapter

Kith and Kin, *Diana Tempest* and *A Yellow Aster* all introduce a type of male character who forcefully returns the protagonist to traditional patterns of relationship. Judith Conisbrough gives up working as a nurse to become Bernard Aglionby's wife, Diana Tempest overcomes her aversion to marriage for John Tempest, and Gwen Waring learns how to be a traditional mother and wife because of Humphrey Strange. These plot solutions are not easily reconciled with the preconceived notion of what New Woman fiction is "supposed" to allow as a solution, and in many ways the heroic male character not only complicates the novel's classification, but even occasions ruptures in the plot itself. This is because the traditional pattern of domination and submission which these three novels adopt fits but poorly with the protagonist's convictions and the reality of her life as a self-standing, working member of society.

In this conclusion, I want to discuss two issues which reflect to a degree the two different elements – traditional and new[81] – that I see as characteristic of the novels examined here. Firstly, I want to revisit the notion of newness which occasioned the inclusion of these novels into the genre. What is it that made Brenda Ayres read *Kith and Kin* as New Woman fiction? Secondly, in analogy to the first two chapters, I want to speculate on the reason for the creation of heroic male characters in certain New Women novels. Since it has been my argument throughout that the creation of binary and of impaired male characters serves a specific function within the context of a New Woman novel, what – if any – is the function of the heroic man?

In her essay "The New Woman, Childbearing, and the Reconstruction of Gender", Loralee MacPike identifies a group of New Women novels which attempt "to normalize New Women . . . by simply disregarding the facts of their lives".

[81] Traditional and new are used here in the sense in which they have been used throughout this chapter, as a description of an individual's attitude to the gender roles, rather than in their more general sense.

> Such novels include Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1892), George Gissing's *The Whirlpool* (1897), and Dr. John Hund's *The New Woman* (1898). The New Womanness of these novels' heroines resides not in their beliefs or values but in their activities. In all three novels, the protagonist adopts New Woman behavior as a means of attracting attention to self, not in response to personal inclination or economic need, as did real New Women.[82]

MacPike here undertakes to exclude a group of novels from the genre by arguing that their protagonists are not "real New Women". Their apparent beliefs and values are a stance, and they collapse happily into conventional gender roles because that is what they have wanted all along. Conversely, I suggest that in the novels examined in this chapter it is the exceptional goodness of the heroic man which makes the protagonist's erstwhile adherence to New Woman beliefs and values unnecessary. It is not that Gwen Waring suddenly becomes convinced that the marriage legislation in her country is as it should be; rather, she realises that in her specific case the legislation does not matter. Similarly, Judith Conisbrough never changes her mind about the iniquity of marrying for a home and food – she just happens to fall in love with the man who offers her both, and is therefore excused (in her own eyes and the reader's) for accepting his offer rather than supporting herself further. It is the same with Diana Tempest: the theoretical convictions of these protagonists continue unaltered throughout the entire plot. Although the introduction of a heroic male character means that they no longer have to live practically by their convictions, this is not the same as abandoning them, and the continued adherence of all three protagonists to "New Woman beliefs or values", even if this facet does not surface during the romantic plot solutions, may well influence a critic to judge them as "real".

In addition, the protagonists examined above are decidedly not traditional women (all three novels ridicule "the much-be-praised 'womanly woman'").[83] At the same time, their attraction to male dominance and their subordination to their partners

[82] MacPike, "The New Woman and Childbearing": p. 379.
[83] KK p. 25.

seem to contradict their New Womanhood, so that it is perhaps most accurate to describe them as an updated version of Old Womanhood. I suggest that this update consists of the cleansing of the female protagonist's attribute cluster of a number of attributes which constitute true absences in Jacques Derrida's sense. All three protagonists are, and remain throughout, exceptionally strong and intelligent women. These attributes were traditionally reserved for male characters, while their absence was thought to be characteristic of women, yet in all three novels examined in this chapter, the author is determined to include them in the protagonist's character. It is these masculine attributes which, in my view, are responsible for the elusive element of "newness" which causes Brenda Ayres to read a novel like *Kith and Kin*, with its courtship plot and patterns of chivalry and feminine submission, as a New Woman novel. Although the novels examined here predominantly revaluate feminine attributes against the foil of the heroic man, as might indeed be expected, in each case the protagonist also re-associates a small selection of positively valued masculine attributes, or "presences" in Derrida's and Jay's sense.[84] This way of characterising the protagonist removes the absences that taint the cluster of binary woman, and consequently the protagonist emerges as an "improved" version of binary womanhood, if not a New Woman. Why this is crucial to our understanding of a novel as a New Woman novel is best illustrated by an adverse example.

In 1897, Rhoda Broughton published a novel by the name of *Dear Faustina*. The novel portrays what Broughton felt were two different approaches to emancipation: Faustina Bateson is a brusque, masculine type, while Althea Vane represents the "womanly" woman's path to improving society. In contrast to the protagonists examined above, whose strength and intelligence was constantly emphasised by the narrator alongside their feminine attributes, Althea is neither strong nor clever, indeed,

[84] Cf. my discussion of "valuation" in the introduction to this work.

she does not possess any masculine attributes at all. This is at least partially a structural decision on the author's part, since the womanly Althea is opposed to the "mannish" New Woman Faustina Bateson, the novel's villain. However, I suggest that Broughton's anxious differentiation between feminine attributes and masculine attributes caused her to overlook that the attribute cluster of woman contains quintessentially negative attributes – absences, in Jacques Derrida's terms – that cannot be left in the cluster of the protagonist without damaging her appeal dramatically.

In stark contrast to other New Women protagonists, Althea's passivity, her slow grasp of situations and characters, and her tendency to freeze before difficulties make her not only an unlikable character, but also contradict her status as a "real" New Woman. Ironically, although *Dear Faustina* is constructed with a view to discrediting the "mannish" New Woman by juxtaposing Faustina with Althea's traditional womanly sweetness, the novel's effect is reversed by Broughton's failure to distance her protagonist from the type of Old Woman so constantly derided in New Woman fiction. In consequence, although Faustina is meant to be the villain of the novel, she is also by far the more interesting character, and the reader cannot help but agree with her when she reproaches Althea for her "inability to embrace a great design or to soar above petty details", and exclaims:

> [i]t is such as you, whose petulant feebleness, whose irritable self-love, whose silly conventions and minute brain power, have brought us where we are; have palliated, justified, explained man's attitude to us.[85]

Although *Dear Faustina* is emphatically not on Faustina's side, the novel fails to disqualify a single one of her reproaches. Althea is indeed unable to embrace "a great design", she constantly obsesses about "petty details" and "silly conventions", and although her brain powers may not be minute, they are certainly limited enough to require the constant support of the novel's heroic man, John Drake. Instead of acting

[85] Rhoda Broughton, *Dear Faustina* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1897), p. 304. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).

with strength and intelligence, Althea drifts through a series of increasingly alarming difficulties from which she is invariably rescued by John. In the end, he single-handedly frustrates Faustina's plan of convincing Althea's future sister-in-law to undertake rescue work (a feat that Althea failed at). At the same time, he ends Althea's dependency on Faustina, while the former reclines on a lawn chair in her characteristic state of confusion and shame. Despite the fact that the novel actually ends more progressively than the others examined in this chapter, namely, with the protagonist's move to a socialist settlement instead of marriage, Broughton's strict adherence to the traditional attributes of woman accidentally leaves her protagonist with a number of true absences in her cluster, too, and truly complicates a reading of *Dear Faustina* as New Woman fiction. By contrast, the novels examined in detail here all scrupulously establish the fact that their protagonists are strong and determined women.[86] Even Iota does not grudge Gwen's mental strength and willpower, but rather her use of these qualities before her "conversion" to motherhood directs them into the proper channels.

Although it is obvious that all of the novels examined in this chapter are conflicted about the changes that were happening to traditional patterns of courtship and relationship, it would be rash to pronounce them anti-feminist solely on account of their positive depiction of the traditional man. This is because the dominant type of masculinity described here actually appealed to a broad range of "real" New Women protagonists as well, as a closer look at the novels examined in the first two chapters of

[86] In this context, it is important to point out that the submission the protagonists of the above novels cherish is not blind, or "pre-revolutionary". To argue that Jessie Fothergill had no conception of the dangers of male dominance, and therefore criticised it but insufficiently, is to misunderstand the dynamics that shaped the inclusion of heroic male characters into novels like *Kith and Kin*. The novel was not simply written "too early" to feature a "real" New Woman protagonist, for it must be noted that Judith Conisbrough, even thirteen years before the heyday of New Woman fiction, submits to male dominance very selectively, and quarrels with her uncle, her parson and her employer Dr Wentworth in order to fulfil her own wishes. Especially Fothergill's portrait of Judith's uncle Mr Aglionby proves that the author was keenly aware of the danger of submitting to male dominance, and aware also of the potential of the stereotypical gender roles to corrupt men. But while the novel otherwise promotes women's self-assertion and rebellion, Bernard – and only he – absorbs Judith's individuality to the point where his wishes become hers, and this dominance is welcomed because it enables Judith to transcend her "oddity".

this work reveals. When Lyndall (*The Story of an African Farm*) wishes for "something great and pure to lift me to itself",[87] for instance, she expresses the same longing for rest that inspired the plot solutions of the novels examined here. Beth's daydreams about a gentle, virile knight and a dark, dare-devil lover in *The Beth Book*, and Mary Desmond's search for her "prince" in *The Wheel of God*, who would "come and kiss her hands and lips, and lift her up and bear her away to a kingdom where love reigns supreme",[88] are other instances of the same emotion. Sarah Grand's vision of a happy ending for her protagonist in *The Beth Book* even included a resetting of the Lancelot myth. Contrary to the novels examined in this chapter, the status of *The Story of an African Farm*, *The Wheel of God* and *The Beth Book* as works of New Woman fiction has not been debated by critics, but in actuality the only difference is the fact that in the novels examined here, the protagonist's desire for rest and protection is fulfilled, while "real New Women" must trudge on alone and unaided.

It follows that the protagonists of *A Yellow Aster*, *Diana Tempest* and *Kith and Kin* are not constitutionally different from other New Women protagonists. The difference between these novels and others is the fact that their authors, rather than pairing the protagonist with a binary man who forces her into autonomy, or an impaired man who perpetuates and increases that autonomy through his dependence, introduce a perfect male character who gently forces the protagonist back into the old code, into dependency – but also into "readability" and rest. This nostalgia about the binary code in its idealised and mystified form can be found in a wide range of New Women novels, and in many cases, it takes the shape of attraction to male dominance.[89] However, "real"

[87] SAF p. 209.
[88] WoG p. 52.
[89] For a movement that was preoccupied with women's agency and self-determinacy, New Women protagonists frequently display a disconcerting preference for dominant men. For instance, although Gregory Rose was by all accounts the best choice that Lyndall could have made with a view to securing her independence, when faced with the actual decision she chooses to leave with her stranger. Anna Lombard, the eponymous protagonist of the 1901 novel by Victoria Cross (Annie Sophie Cory), is spiritually attracted to the Christ-like Gerald Etheridge, but prefers a native from an ancient warrior-caste

New Women novels generally forego the inclusion of a heroic man, because he is a double-edged sword. As the findings of the first chapter have suggested, the inclusion of a binary male character in *The Beth Book, From Man to Man; or, Perhaps only..., The Daughters of Danaus* and *Red Pottage* serves as an incentive for the protagonist's growth. She is initially attracted to the Old Man's strength, but quickly discovers that male dominance is easily perverted, and hence best shunned altogether. Accordingly, these novels chronicle the protagonist's triumph over her need for a strong partner by showing her disillusionment with male power.

Conversely, the introduction of a positive binary male character who neither oppresses the protagonist wrongfully nor relies on her strength renders this process of growth unnecessary. In *Kith and Kin*, *Diana Tempest* and *A Yellow Aster*, the plot solution is engineered by an exceptional man whose domination is cherished because he chooses not to abuse it. Accordingly, and in direct opposition to other New Women novels, these three do not seem to fulfil a didactic purpose similar to the one that Casey Althea Cothran perceives in Grand's and Egerton's work. There is no need for the protagonists here to learn how to identify the "deceitful character"[90] of tyrannical men, or the early warning signs of syphilis, not because deceit and syphilis do not exist in these novels, but simply because Judith, Diana and Gwen have been unusually lucky in their suitors, and hence need not concern themselves with the sordid details that occupy, for instance, all of Sarah Grand's protagonists. In short, these novels offer an individual

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in bed. Evadne of *The Heavenly Twins* realises that she longs for a Christ-like man after she has married the dashing Colonel Colquhoun, yet she had turned down the proposal of a vicar, a "very earnest, very devout" man, in her youth, because she was not attracted to him. (HT (vol. 1) p. 59) Mary Desmond of *The Wheel of God* has ignored more sensitive and pliable men in her life than other protagonists have ever met in theirs, among them an American law student, a young man she helps through a hard winter, and Drs Hall and Mac after her marriage to Cecil Marriott. Mary Crookenden of Lucas Malet's *The Wages of Sin* breaks her engagement to her mild-mannered cousin to be with the overbearing painter James Colthurst, and Anne Brown's erstwhile love for Walter Hamlin in *Miss Brown* is occasioned in no small part by her attraction to his power over her destiny. It follows that the attraction to male dominance was a wide-spread phenomenon in "real" New Women novels as well.

[90] Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire", p. 17. On the subject of George Egerton's "Virgin Soil", for instance, Cothran maintains that the "'keynote' of this text" is that "women must be trained to 'read' men correctly . . . in order to preserve their health". Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire", p. 239.

solution to a problem that, as the women's movement had made abundantly clear, was structural in its nature.[91] However, it is important to keep in mind that the protagonists examined here do not express genuinely different feelings from those prevalent in the general body of New Woman fiction. This latent fascination for the protection of the dominant, traditional man is an important, if disappointing, aspect of New Woman fiction.

Given the manifold differences between New Women writers, it is logical that they did not all depict traditional masculinity as corrupted. Heroic men provide a counterpoint to the "bully" type that Hugh Stutfield described as the New Woman's typical male character: although dominant, they are not "blackguards", and their traditional understanding of the gender roles is not vilified, but rather allows individual characters to escape from the loneliness and exhaustion that is so often the lot of the New Woman protagonist. The observation that traditional masculinity is presented in very different ways in many New Women novels has inspired me to examine examples of the impaired type of man for a similar divergence. The following chapter considers a number of New Women novels in which a dependent man, who furthers the protagonist's emancipation, is yet cast in the role of villain, rather than that of her helpmate. Accordingly, the following chapter further complicates the simple distinction of the New Women's men into "bullies" and "puppets".

[91] Interestingly, Ann Heilmann makes a similar claim about Margaret Oliphant: "[Oliphant] was not concerned with women as a collectivity, or with structural solutions to their living and working conditions . . . Oliphant favoured non-political, individual solutions to general problems, offering a conciliatory message which paid homage to some patriarchal values while rejecting others, and holding fast to the traditional code of female sexual morality which came to be increasingly challenged by the younger feminist writers". Heilmann, "Mrs Grundy's Rebellion": pp. 232-3.

IV. THE POLLUTED MAN AND THE LIMITS OF IMPAIRMENT

My observations on the subject of the impaired man in the second chapter suggest that the happy endings of the novels examined there to some extent depend on the return to traditional patterns of relationship. Although the heightened dependency of the impaired man on the protagonist in each case enabled her to renegotiate conventional gender roles, *The Beth Book*, "A Regeneration of Two", *The Heavenly Twins*, and *Gloriana* all return their protagonists to traditional heterosexual relationship patterns by reinstating the impaired man into the traditional masculine role. Arthur Brock and the poet approach their partners as lovers only after they have made a full recovery (in addition, Arthur is on horseback, and the poet has been freshly revealed as the creator of the "new" Fruen). Evelyn of *Gloriana*, after acting as Hector's feminine partner for the first two thirds of the novel, suddenly asserts his traditional masculinity after Gloria is revealed to be a woman by protecting and eventually marrying her, while in *The Heavenly Twins*, Angelica's husband adopts a more traditional heterosexual position towards her in the wake of the Tenor's death.

What these surprising endings suggest is that although impairment seems to be a logical and effective way to further the protagonist's emancipation, what it did not do was lead to the creation of likeable New Men with whom the protagonist could enter into a union of equals. In short, the tendency to recoil observed in the novels examined in the second chapter seems to suggest that impairing a man is not the best way to emancipate a protagonist or to create a New Man. In order to examine this suspicion further, I have here collected a few examples of New Woman fiction in which the possibility of recoil – the recovery or undeceiving of the impaired male character – is made impossible by the intricacies of the plot. As a result, the reversal of the partners' gender roles is extended indefinitely.

The novels I have selected for this chapter are Vernon Lee's *Miss Brown*, Annie E. Holdsworth's *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, and Iota's *Poor Max*.[1] In all three novels, the impairment of the protagonist's partner is a crucial and permanent aspect of his masculinity, and far supersedes that of the male characters examined in the second chapter of this work. Walter Hamlin of *Miss Brown* is an aesthetic poet whose genetic makeup has been corrupted by his family's habit of interbreeding; he is constitutionally weak and effeminate without hope of recovering from his various afflictions. Dunstane Momerie of *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten* is a self-deluded impostor who relies on his wife's abilities to feed the family, pleading a paralysis of the legs to avoid work. Max Morland of *Poor Max* is described as a "neurotic" by his aunt – like Dunstane, he relies entirely on his wife's strength, circumspection and writing potential to maintain their household while he indulges by turns in day-dreams and rants.

For simplicity's sake, I will refer to this type of character (a permanently, genetically compromised man who excludes the possibility of recoil) as *polluted*. It is important to stress that I understand the polluted man to be a logical continuation of the concept of the impaired man. Arthur Brock and, for instance, Max Morland, differ only in the degree of their limitations – Arthur's is temporary and Max's is permanent – and both allow the protagonist to develop her own masculine attributes for the protection of her partner. It is quite unimportant for the success of the protagonist's ascension to the masculine role whether her partner is temporarily or permanently impaired. However, in terms of the novel's overall tone and its ending, the differences between an impaired and a polluted man are extreme. All novels examined in this chapter have what may be called a catastrophic ending: *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten* ends with the

[1] The idea of the permanently impaired man can also be applied with benefit to a reading of the following characters: Cecil Marriott of George Egerton's WoG, Courcy de Smith of Lucas Malet's *The Far Horizon*, Colonel Tempest of Mary Cholmondeley's DT and Hugh Scarlett of RP, Alfred Cayley Pounce of Sarah Grand's BB, Cuthbert Marchant of Gertrude Dix's *The Girl from the Farm*, and Robert Kingslake of Netta Syrett's *The Day's Journey*.

protagonist's death, Max Morland's death in *Poor Max* does not even end his wife's sacrifices but transfers them to the weak offspring he has fathered, and the ending of *Miss Brown* is perhaps best described as death in life.[2]

Considering that the strategy of impairment has previously been discussed as a positive means of negotiating the narrowly circumscribed gender roles of both male and female characters, it is perplexing that, in many cases, the polluted man seems to have been a spectre as frightening to the author as any of the Old Men created elsewhere. My observations on the following pages are meant to inquire into this contradiction by examining the effect of a permanently impaired man on the New Woman protagonist.

[2] *Miss Brown* ends with the protagonist's promise to marry a man she loathes. Cf. also the appendix for a summary of the novel.

Miss Brown, Vernon Lee

Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), although not overly well-known today, was a prolific writer who published "in nearly every genre but poetry"[3] according to Janice Schroeder. Unlike the authors examined so far, Lee had close intellectual ties to the movement of aestheticism, and many friends who were themselves writers. It is perhaps the more surprising that *Miss Brown*, one of her earliest works, is both an acrid critique of aestheticism and a *roman à clef* that alienated many of her literary friends.[4]

In the context of this thesis, I will read *Miss Brown*'s Walter Hamlin as a polluted male character.[5] This is not to suggest that he is not first and foremost a caricature of what Vernon Lee saw as the typical male aesthete. Indeed, the other novels examined in this context likewise feature men of the artist-type, suggesting that what I refer to here as pollution was perhaps associated with a very particular lifestyle adopted predominantly by *fin-de-siècle* intellectuals and artists. Throughout the novel, it is never quite clear whether Walter's effete nature has caused him to adopt aestheticism, or whether aesthetic ideals have corrupted his masculinity. However, since his propensity to vice is congenital and he is descended from many generations of debauched men who presumably lived before the time aestheticism became a movement, perhaps one can conjecture that Walter's discipleship of aestheticism is only the contemporary

[3] Janice Schroeder, "Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography (Review)", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 38.4 (2005), pp. 434-6: p. 434.
[4] Sondeep Kandola, for instance, mentions that Lee's caricature of Oscar Wilde as Postlethwaite, the "prince of aesthetes", destroyed her friendship with Wilde. Sondeep Kandola, "Vernon Lee: New Woman?", *Women's Writing* 12.3 (2005), pp. 471-84: p. 477. Apparently Lee had a habit of jeopardising her friendships through literary portraits. Witness Catherine Delyfer's comments on Henry James' alienation over his portrait as Jervase Marion in Lee's novella "Lady Tal": Delyfer, "Rewriting the Myth of Atalanta": p. 2.
[5] I will treat all characters in *Miss Brown* as fictional characters, rather than as caricatures of real people. For an early account of the connections between the novel's characters and the people Vernon Lee knew in London, cf. Leonee Ormond, "Vernon Lee as a Critic of Aestheticism in *Miss Brown*", *Colby Library Quarterly* 9.3 (1970), pp. 131-54. Ormond collects a great amount of detail on Lee's London experiences, but together with contemporary voices such as Henry James, dismisses her account of aesthete society as "neurotic". Cf. Ormond, "Vernon Lee as a Critic": p. 151.

expression of an age-old proclivity to immorality that periodically erupts in his family,[6] and causes its members to embrace whatever movement currently caters to immorality.[7]

At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist Anne Brown is a shy and underprivileged servant whom Walter meets on one of his journeys to Italy. Because she pleases his aesthetic sense, he has her educated and settles a sum on her, and, at the stipulation of her cousin Richard Brown, Walter additionally binds himself to marrying Anne should she wish it, but leaves her nominally free to marry whomever she chooses. Anne initially looks up to her benefactor, as she calls him, because of his power to shape her destiny. This humble, and in many ways traditionally feminine attitude towards Walter receives a series of shocks as Anne discovers upon their reunion in London that Walter is in reality physically and morally weaker than she is. She quickly realises that he will perish without her moral guidance, and although this destroys her girlish idol, her sense of obligation causes her to mobilise all her resources to meet the needs of Walter's ever-increasing dependency.

Miss Brown elaborates the differences between Walter and Anne conscientiously, and with an eye to dramatic effect which gives evidence of Vernon Lee's own associations with the visual arts. Even before the days of Anne's disillusionment, the future relationship of the pair is foreshadowed by the narrator's description of the stark contrast between Anne's and Walter's physique: while Anne has a "tall and massive figure", he is described as "small, slight, meagre, white, with . . . light hair and moustache, and [a] melancholy face like a woman's".[8] Even during the first days of their acquaintance, Anne repeatedly stops him from helping her with heavy

[6] Walter comments quite freely on his genetic heritage when he leads the protagonist Anne Brown through the portrait gallery of his inbred and addiction-riddled family. Cf. Vernon Lee, *Miss Brown*, Karen Yuen (ed.) in: Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (gen. ed.), *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899*, vol. 2 of 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), p. 122. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: MB p. 122.
[7] This is the judgement of aestheticism that Vernon Lee adopts in *Miss Brown*, not mine.
[8] MB p. 29.

lifting and carrying, but this role reversal is partially checked by her admiration for Walter, and her feeling of inferiority. When she first travels to London after her education in Coblenz, Anne is still a shy woman, and very eager to please the man who had her educated, despite the fact that her pride occasionally rebels against her dependency.

All this changes as Anne becomes intimately acquainted with Walter's character. After a few weeks in London and in his society, she realises that Walter is in reality "vain, thin-skinned, professionally jealous, and afraid of the judgment, as he was avid of the praise, of his own inferiors".[9] In addition, he is obsessed with passion and lust, and actively cultivates these tendencies because his transgressions and the feeling of remorse which accompanies them serve him as inspiration for his poetry.[10] When Anne at one point draws Walter's attention to a settlement on his land that is in dire need of renovation, he purposely visits Cold Fremley to draw inspiration from the squalor in which its inhabitants live, but refuses to help them, and instead composes a ballad on the subject.[11] Hamlin's inability to abandon aesthetic subject matter and style for a more "simple, self-unconscious",[12] new school of poetry, is another point of contention between him and Anne. These latter two instances – her request that he help the residents of Cold Fremley and her gentle stipulation to abandon aestheticism – are examples of Anne's growing self-esteem. Where she had acquiesced unquestioningly in Walter's orders at the beginning, she later attempts actively to influence him, to "help him up", as it were, out of the quagmire of depravity and depression that keeps him perpetually beneath her expectations, and beneath herself.

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[9] MB p. 148.
[10] For the influence of ideas of decadence and degeneration on Lee's portrait of Walter Hamlin, as well as for general orientation, I have found Talia Schaffer and Kathy Alexis Psomiades' collection of essays on women writers and aestheticism helpful: Talia Schaffer and Kathy Alexis Psomiades, *Women and British Aestheticism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).
[11] It is implied that the living conditions of this settlement further incestuous relationships.
[12] MB p. 148.

During the phase of disillusionment, Anne develops and defines precisely those masculine attributes which she misses in Walter. When she discovers that he is wavering in his resolutions, she begins to formulate her own convictions more clearly, and resolves to live by them with iron fortitude. When he refuses to give philanthropic help, Anne begins to study political economy to teach the underprivileged. The more Walter digresses from the path that she perceives as righteous, the more she forces herself to stay on that path, until in the end Anne has become the man she wanted Walter to be. The narrator explains:

> [s]ome few women seem to be born to have been men, or at least not to have been women . . . Masculine women, mere men in disguise, they are not: the very strength and purity of their nature, its intensity as of some undiluted spirit, is dependent upon their cleaner and narrower woman's nature, upon their narrowness and obstinacy of woman's mind; they are, and can only be, true women; but women without woman's instincts and wants, sexless – women made not for man but for humankind. Anne Brown was one of these.[13]

This paragraph praises both Anne's feminine and her masculine attributes, but it is clear from the focus of the passage, and indeed from all instances in which Anne is characterised, that her continued exposure to Walter's feminine associated depravity (his various addictions, vagaries, indecisiveness, and lack of courage and purpose) gradually increases her share of masculine attributes – her sense of duty and honour, her moral strength, and her steadfastness of purpose.

When Walter elopes with his like-minded cousin Madame Sacha Elaguine, Anne's previous moral growth is put to the test as she faces a difficult question: should she, who is so superior to Walter, save herself from his contaminating influence? Or does her greater strength not, on the contrary, place her under the obligation to protect and support him? This moral quandary is complicated by the interference of Anne's cousin Richard, who has always opposed her relationship with Walter, and who is characterised throughout as his physical and moral opposite.

[13] MB p. 207.

Richard Brown was Anne's childhood protector and warden after the death of her parents. Like her a member of the working class, he regards the aesthetic movement that Walter Hamlin represents with suspicion. References to Richard's "conscious masculinity"[14] abound in *Miss Brown*. He is described as a "big dark man, with . . . bushy hair and beard" (the physical opposite of Walter) and his appearance initially repulses Anne, who feels "against Richard Brown a vague, instinctive aversion, as to something insulting and degrading to herself"[15] when she meets him again in London after her education. Richard in his turn is "at first annoyed, then amused, then indignant"[16] at Anne's mindless copying of the entire outlook of the aesthetes with whom she associates. At his impetus, Anne begins to wake up to the incongruence between Walter's moral outlook and her own.

Because of her thorough disappointment with Walter, Richard, by sheer virtue of opposition, initially appears like an ideal mate for Anne, but indeed he is not: the narrator emphasises that he is actually "hard, and arrogant, and coarse", "prejudiced, and haughty, and contemptuous", and that his character is marred by

> an indefinable coarseness of fibre, a want of appreciation, of sympathy with other people's ideals, a tendency to despise all those around him, and to see meanness in all those who were not in the same position, or who had not the same views and aims as himself; above all, an unconscious desire to domineer – a brutal, almost animal wish for supremacy . . .
>
> In his way – his blind, self-satisfied, unselfish way – Dick was as vain as Hamlin: wherever [Anne] looked vanity and hollowness met her, and she herself could not even conceive what vanity was.[17]

Nevertheless, Anne describes Richard's friendship as "her great consolation and support" and initially delights in the "sense of safety and repose"[18] that his presence

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[14] MB p. 182.
[15] MB p. 63, MB p. 108.
[16] MB p. 116.
[17] MB p. 61 ("hard"), MB p. 182 ("prejudiced"), MB p. 183, p. 198 ("coarseness of fibre", "blind, self-satisfied, unselfish")
[18] MB p. 243.

gives her, and when he suddenly proposes to her, she is momentarily elated: "[i]t was too sudden, too wonderful. The vision of being Richard Brown's wife overcame her like some celestial vision a fasting saint".[19] Only a day later, however, Anne sees Richard's offer of marriage in a different light:

> Richard Brown loved her, wanted her; it was the old nauseous story over again; the sympathy, the comradeship, the quiet brotherly and sisterly affection had all been a sham . . . the one man who had remained to her as an object of friendship and respect . . . – had conjured her to respect her nobler nature, her soul, her generous instincts – had supplicated her not to degrade herself, – nay, had quibbled with right and wrong, had urged her to break her trust, – what for? that he might satisfy his whim of possessing her.[20]

Anne's realisation that Richard is not predominantly interested in setting her free from her obligations to her "benefactor", but instead wants to possess her in the same way she feels possessed by Hamlin already, causes her to refuse him, and shortly after she agrees to marry Walter in order to save him from certain death. On the surface, Anne's decision is motivated by her pride, her sense of duty and commitment, and her strength. On a wider scale, however, I suggest that her decision to choose the effeminate, impaired man she can control, over the traditional, dominant man who would control her, bespeaks her growth as a self-dependent woman. By embracing her obligations to Walter, Anne ensures that her newly developed masculine qualities will be developed further, instead of repressed by her traditional cousin, who has the bodily capacity to perform in the masculine role which Anne has usurped with regard to Walter.

However, my reading of *Miss Brown* must be qualified, lest it give the impression that Anne is making a positive choice that the narrator supports. This is not the case. The ending of *Miss Brown* is particularly bleak, even for a New Woman novel:

> Miss Brown suddenly shivered, as he put his arm round her shoulder. The flash of a street lamp as they passed quickly, had shown her

[19] MB p. 242.
[20] MB p. 243.

> Hamlin's face close to her own, and radiant with the triumph of satisfied vanity.[21]

It is not that Walter Hamlin is a good choice for Anne, but rather that he is the only acceptable choice in her situation. John Kucich has argued, on the subject of Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, for "a long-standing tradition of feminist narrative, in which women's opposing choices are shown to present them merely with complementary dilemmas".[22] This seems to hold true in Anne's case: her choice is between absolute responsibility for Walter, and absolute submission to Richard's "whim of possessing her".[23]

Taken as a whole, *Miss Brown* thus reveals the limitations of the concept of impairment, as this concept is pushed to its furthest extreme. Walter's permanent and hereditary impairment guarantees Anne's ascent into self-determinacy and agency, yet it also forces her into the position formerly occupied by the biological man in a traditional relationship: she inherits both privileges and duties, both the ability to steer and the obligation to steer, while he is reduced to the role of a binary woman. For the rest of her life, the narrator explains, Anne will have to direct Walter's course and supervise his actions to prevent his lack of purpose and resolve from leading him astray again.

Unlike Beth in *The Beth Book* or Fruen in "A Regeneration of Two", Anne cannot look forward to an eventual recovery of her partner, and equality between them is likewise out of the question, since Walter can never overcome his limitations. Although his impairment enables Anne to grow above herself and to impress others with her strength and determination, it does not make him a good New Man, and Anne only remains at his side because she holds herself to a reversed code of chivalry: since

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[21] MB p. 322.
[22] John Kucich, "Curious Dualities: The Heavenly Twins (1893) and Sarah Grand's Belated Modernist Aesthetics", in Barbara Leah Harman and Susan Meyer (eds.), *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction*, vol. 10, Wellesley Studies in Critical Theory, Literary History and Culture (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), pp. 202-3.
[23] MB p. 243.

he is the weaker vessel, it is her duty to protect him. Her decision to marry him signals that she has come to terms with the idea that Walter will always be dependent and weak:

> [s]he could prevent his growing worse, she could not make him grow better; her position would be as that of a woman who devoted herself to nurse a person sick of an incurable disease: there would be none of the excitement of a possible cure, only the routine, the anxiety peculiar to a case where the patient is for ever on the brink of getting worse.[24]

This is the opposite of Beth's and Fruen's situation in *The Beth Book* and "A Regeneration of Two". In both of those texts, the lover's illness is a temporary interlude that titillates the protagonist, but does not permanently fixate her in the position of the dominant partner. By contrast, this fixation of the protagonist, and the resulting mental strain, not only characterises *Miss Brown*, but can be found in the next example as well.

[24] MB p. 309.

The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten, Annie E. Holdsworth

Like Anne Brown, the protagonist of *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten* is a strong woman whose initial girlish dependence on her husband decreases over the period of the novel, while her masculine attributes are brought to the fore by her partner's permanent impairment. When Priscilla first meets Dunstane, she has just published a book and is tormented by the reviews it received. At this point, Dunstane appears to be in control of the relationship:

> [w]ith an excellent discernment he avoided all allusion to literature. When his reticence had restored her confidence he spoke of her success. It was his hand that drew the fangs from the beast hidden in her bosom, and he earned her passionate gratitude by giving back the self-respect she had lost.[25]

Dunstane is a promising young author who talks "of frugality and simplicity, high thinking and plain living. His ideal was a white dream of intellectual desires". Because both want to move to London and become writers, they decide to marry, and when Dunstane promises that "they would live in an attic, near the stars" and "hunt success in leash",[26] she trusts his vision of their married life together. However, very shortly after their marriage Dunstane begins to treat Priscilla with "condescension and superiority".[27] He mocks her "girlish ideals", calls her "a little goosie gander" for suggesting they limit their expenses to their financial means, and at one point comments on her writing: "the feminine mind was never logical. What foolish fiction have you been dignifying with the name of literature this morning?" before comparing his "serious work" with Priscilla's "little attempts".[28]

In reality, it is Dunstane's work which never goes beyond the status of an attempt. He pretends to others and to himself that he is writing an important book on the

[25] YHLE p. 14.
[26] YHLE p. 15, also the previous two quotations.
[27] YLHE p. 22.
[28] YLHE p. 24 ("girlish ideals", "goosie gander"), YLHE p. 31 ("the feminine mind").

subject of religion and pleads this occupation whenever Priscilla asks him to undertake tutoring to increase their meagre financial means. After realising that Dunstane will not contribute towards their expenses, Priscilla begins to write articles to maintain both of them, instead of writing the work she had planned to write. She grows gradually more disillusioned with her husband, but at the same time her work as a journalist and her dominance in the household – she calls her husband "a fascinating live doll"[29] – fill her with pride. Contrary to Dunstane, whose assumed airs[30] make it difficult for him to adjust to life in Regent's Building in the poor quarters of London, Priscilla's "homespun"[31] ideals help her to adapt quickly to her new situation.

Although Dunstane's weakness and peevishness increase continuously, Priscilla is happy when she becomes pregnant. However, midway through her pregnancy, Dunstane suffers an attack of hysterical paralysis of the legs. The doctor who examines him (wrongfully) pronounces that Dunstane's affliction results from hereditary damage to his nerve tissue, and that he will never be able to move his legs again. Notwithstanding this stroke of fate, Priscilla does not despair. She now openly embraces the duties of breadwinner:

> [s]he must be up and doing, present and future were in her hands. Dunstane's responsibilities were at an end. She stepped into the place he had never filled. From the bars of the cage her courage went skyward, singing. Heartily she adapted herself to the new conditions.[32]

Since Dunstane has never filled the place of the traditional man in their relationship, it is perhaps rather better for Priscilla to be able to blame his impairment on an actual physical illness. The arrival of their first child, Dollie, further helps Priscilla to cope with her growing frustration over Dunstane's absolute passivity. At the same time,

[29] YLHE p. 21.
[30] He is a grocer's son, but does not like to be reminded of it.
[31] YLHE p. 14.
[32] YLHE p. 49.

caring for the child reveals that Dunstane's character contains a few positive feminine attributes as well:

> [t]he baby gave her a new view of him, showing kind traits in his disposition. He was tender, gentle as a woman, with more than a woman's patience.[33]

However, Dunstane's internal impairment is repeated in his daughter Dollie, who is a weak and sickly child. The armistice between the couple comes to an abrupt end when Dunstane lets Dollie choke rather than betray that he can actually move if he wants to, a fact that Priscilla had found out some time ago but kept secret. To Priscilla, the circumstances of Dollie's death complete her disillusionment with her husband. Like Walter Hamlin's elopement in *Miss Brown*, the event forces her to accept that she has tied herself to a permanently impaired man, who will never improve, never live up to her standards, and always depend not only on her feminine attributes of patience and self-sacrifice, but also on her masculine strength, her intelligence and her determination. In her own estimation, Priscilla is a "strong woman bound for life to a weakling, a faint outline of man",[34] but like Anne in *Miss Brown*, she chooses this fate with all its associated responsibilities over eloping with her neighbour Stephen Malden, to whom she is temporarily drawn mostly because he is the exact opposite of her husband.

Of all the residents at Regent's Building, only Stephen sees behind Dunstane's mask of studied eloquence and elaborate procrastination, and he is frustrated with Dunstane's "weakness, his very lack of manhood" that forces Priscilla to fill his place: "[i]f he were a man he would work at something else",[35] Stephen tells an assembly of neighbours, but is rebuked by them for his lack of faith in Dunstane's project of giving the world a "New Religion". Contrary to Dunstane, Stephen's "strong manhood"[36] urges him to protect Priscilla, whose strength is giving way under her many obligations. When

[33] YLHE p. 69.
[34] YLHE p. 68.
[35] YLHE p. 108, YLHE p. 64.
[36] YLHE p. 96.

he asks her to elope with him and to begin life anew together, her immediate desire is to accept the safety and rest that his superior strength promises. After many months of supporting Dunstane, and after the loss of her daughter for which he is responsible, the narrator comments that Priscilla "had no strength to wrestle with [Stephen's] masterful love".[37] While she is still contemplating an elopement, she cross-examines him on his masculine qualities:

> [a]nd would you be willing to give up everything, your manhood even, and pretend … pretend … and deceive yourself into thinking you were ill, when all the time … all the time … you were only … selfish … and a coward?[38]

In the end, Priscilla withstands the temptation to rely on Stephen and instead decides to rely on her own strength and endurance. She rekindles her efforts to write the *Book of the Great City*, a project she had abandoned under the necessity of earning money to support Dunstane, instead of accepting Malden's proposal that he support her while she finishes the book. Although Priscilla ultimately fails to finish her project because her health deteriorates, her decision to fulfil her duty towards her weak husband seals her acquisition of masculine attributes by placing her at the top end of her binary marriage – for better, for worse. Structurally, her choice is similar to Anne Brown's decision to marry Walter Hamlin. Both protagonists are confronted with a male character whose exaggerated impairment is the reason for their disappointment with him; both are tempted by an offer of elopement with a traditional man who promises protection and relief from the responsibilities of caring for their weak partners, and both decide to accept their situation and extend their strong, "cool hands"[39] to help their husbands, rather than enter into a traditional relationship in which they would be protected and supported, but not perhaps as powerful as they know themselves to be in their

[37] YLHE p. 95.
[38] YLHE p. 97.
[39] RP p. 110. I read Hugh Scarlett of RP as a permanently impaired man, although he commits suicide before he can cause Rachel any permanent anguish.

relationship with the impaired men. Priscilla's choice, like Anne's, does not lead to happiness, but it does turn her into a heroic, almost saint-like woman who seems to have an endless supply of ingenuity and strength. This effect of the impaired man is familiar from the observations made in the second chapter of this work. Priscilla's story suggests that women can successfully perform in the role of breadwinner if the necessity arises; also that some women are stronger, more determined, and more practical than some men, and this claim contradicts the idea of natural attribute clusters.

The problem with this particular relationship is that although Dunstane's impairment is necessary for Priscilla's elevation into a perfect woman (she fittingly sits as a model for a painting entitled "A Nineteenth-Century Madonna"[40] with Dollie), it simultaneously renders him unfit to associate with her. The resulting imbalance between the partners resembles the traditional imbalance between heterosexual couples who adhered to the ideology of the separate spheres; it is merely the poles which have been exchanged. Like Anne Brown, Priscilla must accept that Dunstane's permanent impairment forces her into the position of a binary man without hope of resting, without hope of elevating her husband to her own position: he, like the binary woman in a traditional relationship, will forever depend on her protection and support. And like *Miss Brown, The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten* does not suggest that this exchange was in any way an ideal, utopian vision of gender roles and relations: Priscilla is worn out by her responsibilities in a little over three years and dies without having completed her novel.

[40] YLHE p. 65.

Poor Max, Iota

Iota's *Poor Max,* like the novels examined previously, centres on the effect of a permanently impaired male character on his wife. The titular Max Morland is "a neurotic",[41] and his character shows many similarities to Walter Hamlin and Dunstane Momerie. Like them, Max is an artist who has a thoroughly patriarchal attitude to women, but he does not have the strength necessary to enforce this attitude. Max has been brought up in relative splendour by his childless aunt and uncle, but was cut off unexpectedly on his uncle's death. Spoilt both by money and by his own talents and capacity for charming people, Max perpetually hovers on the border of accomplishing something great: "[t]here was all the provocative charm of anticipation about him, with none of the staleness inseparable from achievement".[42]

All characters in *Poor Max* refer to Max's neuroticism as a form of affliction that cannot be cured and must therefore be borne patiently by his friends. His aunt Lady Grindal remarks early in the novel that "a life made easy for him is a necessity, and he is no more responsible in the matter than though he had weak lungs, and couldn't stand the east wind".[43] Like Walter Hamlin, Max Morland is described as being outwardly feminine: he has "feminine intuition" and "long feminine fingers", and the narrator comments that he is often "hindered by the woman within him" and that his soul is "vexed with its own weakness".[44]

When he is about twenty-four (but still referred to as a promising young man by his friends) ,[45] Max falls in love with Judith Becher. His aunt initially objects to the marriage because she reasons that Judith is not "modern enough . . . to be the wife of a

[41] Iota, *Poor Max* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1898), p. 98. All further references are to this edition and will be given in the following format: PM p. 98. This novel is accessible online through the internet archive (archive.org).
[42] PM p. 69.
[43] PM p. 32.
[44] PM p. 21 ("intuition"), PM p. 28 ("fingers"), PM p. 85 ("weakness").
[45] Cf. PM p. 69.

neurotic": "she hasn't self-insistence enough, she's not sufficiently exacting and self-respecting and high-minded".[46] Like the protagonists of *Miss Brown* and *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, Judith indeed begins her married life with an illusion of her husband's superiority and strength. At their engagement, she says, with "a gentle trust in her purple eyes":

> I feel so funny and cold . . . and – unsure; and yet wherever you are you'll make summer, and wherever you go I'll go with you, and your summer will be mine![47]

However, in a process of disillusionment similar to that observed in the other two novels of this chapter, Judith slowly realises that her idea of her husband is not accurate, but instead of despairing, she grows stronger in proportion to her understanding of Max's weakness. Even early on in the novel she insists that her fragility is "only a look", and after the first year of their relationship, Max complacently remarks to his friend that

> Judith is a good deal stronger than she looks; . . . it's one of her charms. The delicate grace and lightness with which she can lift a weight, or endure a fatigue that would floor an able-bodied man, would astonish you.[48]

After the birth of their two sons, Judith's initial infatuation with Max begins to give way to irritation and bafflement. She starts to object, hesitatingly at first, to what she calls the "freakishness" and the "weakness"[49] of his character. By this she chiefly means Max's propensity to theatrical display, but there are more concrete reasons for her dissatisfaction as well: like Dunstane, Max can never produce enough to support his family. Because his idea of a perfect relationship furthermore includes the idleness of his wife (he wants "no trace of active wifedom ever visible upon her" and argues that "a

[46] PM p. 35.
[47] PM p. 48.
[48] PM p. 90, PM p. 103.
[49] PM p. 88.

woman slips from her throne into the – gutter"[50] if she works for her bread), Judith not only sits on her needlework if he surprises her at home, but also hides the fact that she has begun to publish novels to save the family from bankruptcy.

At this point in the novel, Iota introduces Max's old friend Captain Sandy Muir, who forthwith provides a counterpoint to Max, and with whom Judith falls in love on account of his strength. Sandy is "a man of strong intelligence" with "a fine, erect, soldierly figure" – "courteous obedience to women" is his "strong point",[51] as the narrator explains. In direct opposition to Max, he is "unemotional" and "imperturbable", and claims that he has "no nerves".[52] As in *Miss Brown* and *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, the attitude of the man who tempts the protagonist with a vision of rest does not differ from that of the polluted man – both Max and Sandy think of Judith as a dependent and passive woman, and strongly object to her creating anything "but an atmosphere".[53] Yet in contrast to Max, Sandy is strong enough to enforce his will on Judith. He comments mentally that she is "only a weak creature needing care", and while his patriarchal treatment of her causes Judith to mock that she is "entirely denied the exercise of free-will", she is acutely conscious that the "rest and relief of being near him"[54] is a welcome change from her usual self-dependence and responsibility for her husband.

While Sandy and Judith strike up a friendship over their mutual concern for Max's well-being, Judith's marriage slowly deteriorates as she gropes toward an understanding of her husband's true character, until one day she catches him in one of his innumerable lies. To Judith, whose mother broke her heart over her husband's lies, this falsehood supplies her with the clue to Max's nature.

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[50] PM p. 108, PM p. 46.
[51] PM p. 121.
[52] PM p. 129, PM p. 125.
[53] PM p. 104.
[54] PM p. 123, PM p. 205.

> For an hour did Judith sit without a move or an emotion, patiently forging on to the truth, her intelligence, minute by minute, expanding steadily and strangely. From the day she had first met Max until now every simplest incident of their lives passed before her in a panorama glittering with hard fact. She could elude nothing, gloss over nothing. Every minutest turn in Max, stripped of its concealing charm, to her honest, awakened, cruel young mind, spelt falsehood.[55]

Judith's reaction to this realisation is decidedly unfeminine: she does not shed a tear,[56] but has to control an urge to extinguish her family: "[s]he could have killed Max and her two little children, because they were his also and partook of his lies. She could have killed them that moment as though they had been rats".[57]

During the ensuing crisis Judith realises that Max is unworthy of her love, but also dependent on her because of his congenital weakness. A parallel might be drawn here to the events of *Miss Brown* and *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, where the protagonists similarly realise that their love for their partners has given way to disdain for their weakness, but that this very weakness also compels them to stay with and to protect their partners. This is precisely the conclusion that Judith reaches during a short holiday in her native Ireland, where she decides that she "had no blame for Max any more than she had for his children".[58] "I'm so necessary to Max", she later says to Lady Grindal, "[h]e'd perish – without me – just as the children would. More – there are orphanages for – for little children".[59] Like Anne and Priscilla, Judith is masculinised by her sudden realisation that she is superior to her husband:

> [i]n the reaction from her first horror of repulsion, her longing to kill her children . . . a new, fierce, combative love had sprung up in her for the maimed creatures – an untender, stern, defiant love.

[55] PM p. 111.
[56] As a matter of fact, her husband asks shortly before his death: "[y]ou never cry, Judith; how's that? – After all, little girl, you're oddly young". PM pp. 155-6.
[57] PM p. 114.
[58] PM p. 114.
[59] PM p. 282.

Judith refers to this new self and her love as "tigerish",[60] and begins to count Max among the number of people dependent on her: "[s]he had her two little children and her one big one to think of, and for, and around".[61] For the rest of Max's lifetime, in accordance with Lady Grindal's warning that Max is not to blame for his weakness,[62] Judith treats him as if he was unaccountable for his actions, even when he has an affair.

Judith is not entirely unhappy with this arrangement in the beginning. Similarly to Priscilla Momerie, who is excited to earn money for her child and husband, she muses: "I'm indispensable – to all of them! And no one can help me! I'll take my life entirely into my own hands. It will be amusing to manage it – an excitement!"[63] She promises herself that she will soon "fill out"[64] her new responsibilities and that she, unlike her own mother, will not die from the disappointment of finding herself superior to her husband in the attributes that characterise traditional masculinity. However, she soon grows tired with Max's weakness, especially since Sandy's continuous presence draws her attention to her husband's faults: "[Max] made her feel giddy and a little faint. She turned, for a tonic, to watch Sandy's immovability. With a guilty start she soon fell back upon Max".[65]

As in *Miss Brown* and *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, the traditional man tempts the protagonist with a vision of rest that underscores the limitations of the concept of the impaired man. Although his traditional attitude is potentially limiting to her self-development, Judith's need for rest perpetually threatens her emancipation:

> [w]here [Sandy] was was law, with power to give and to keep the law, and she was finding that of all things in heaven and earth nothing is so exceeding wearying to a woman as slackness in man or beast; she has, in

[60] PM p. 129, also the previous quotation.
[61] PM p. 262.
[62] Cf. PM p. 32.
[63] PM pp. 141-2.
[64] PM p. 142.
[65] PM p. 182.

> face of it, to keep herself so uncompromisingly erect. When Sandy was about Judith felt always as though she could stoop a little.[66]

This imperative desire for rest, which likewise characterised the novels examined in the previous chapter, returns in the novels examined here with increased force.

After Judith decides to treat her husband as a perpetual child, the couple begin to move into a checkmate situation in which Max resents Judith's usurpation of his "masculine duties", and Judith resents his inability to discharge these duties properly. This conflict is illustrated by the couple's skirmish over financial supervision. Judith argues that while she is "the possessor of a sound commercial instinct",[67] Max of necessity manages badly because he is repulsed by the sordidness of everyday life. Max, on the other hand, is horrified by her attempt to perform his duties. He accuses her of a "brutal directness of speech"[68] and is especially hurt by her interference because she does not behave like a traditional woman during this particular confrontation. The narrator explains that

> had she been mercifully moved to turn and rend him with treble adjectives and a screech . . . he need no longer have grovelled worm-like under the crushing consciousness of being beneath his wife.[69]

But because Judith demands to be in charge of their joint expenses in a determined and business-like a manner, Max feels the interference with what he considers his rights doubly painfully. The dispute results in a rush on Max's part to keep up with his duties as head of the household, yet he only manages to pay the bills because he begins to borrow substantial sums from Churton Graves, an acquaintance of his, who openly courts Judith. Judith comments: "if only he had been the woman and I the man! I

[66] PM p. 133.
[67] PM p. 156.
[68] PM p. 158.
[69] PM p. 160.

believe I could have delighted in all these radiant changes – I could have been out a good deal! But – an iridescent man!"[70]

Because of Max's borrowing, the relationship between Judith and Churton Graves, who had been involved in a martial scandal before, quickly becomes the object of gossip among the couple's friends. Sandy Muir is especially indignant, but Judith refuses all help with rectifying the situation, and indeed remarks that "[i]f a wife needs this sort of help she must help herself while she can".[71] Accordingly, as soon as she has earned enough money through writing novels to pay her husband's debts, she confronts Max once more about his inability to manage financial matters, and asks him to protect her honour from gossip. Instead of admitting his error, Max again reproaches Judith for meddling with his duties, whereupon the narrator remarks that Judith "was angry and sore with her own folly in making that one little human appeal for his protection before taking him finally under her own".[72] After this last unfruitful appeal to Max, Judith pays out Churton Graves and sends him away from London to stop the gossip. Churton, like Sandy Muir, begs to be allowed to free Judith from her obligations towards her husband, but she absolutely declines to leave Max. She has at last decided to take him fully under her protection.

The novel then fast-forwards a few years to the couple's final confrontation. Judith has accepted the status quo by replacing her need for romantic love with motherly love, as she explains to Lady Grindal:

> I think more about [Max] than I do about my other children; but one demands the best in one's beloved, doesn't one? I – I understand now how a mother feels to a docked, maimed, helpless little child, I think.[73]

However, during an innocent banter with her husband, Judith jokingly asks if he considers her a failure, and inadvertently triggers a flash of self-recognition in Max.

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[70] PM p. 170.
[71] PM p. 218.
[72] PM p. 234.
[73] PM p. 279.

> [T]o her absolute and entire astonishment Judith saw growing up with gourd-like rapidity under her eyes a Max she had never either met or imagined – an adult, dulled, fatigued creature staring right before him at Fear.[74]

After he has recognised that the world considers him a failure, Max makes a desperate last bid for authority. "You have taken my place too often", he complains, "You've got into the way of bossing the show; you're growing jealous of your authority. It's quite time you were taught to know your place!"[75] In his apprehension about the role reversal, Max displays traits similar to Arthur Brock in *The Beth Book* and the poet in "A Regeneration of Two". His wife notes "a strange, remote dignity quite new to him" and the narrator even claims that during this conversation "Max, after a fashion odd and vague, as incomprehensible as it was inexplicable and entirely his own, had . . . justified himself of his manhood".[76] However, and in direct contrast to Arthur Brock and the poet, Max's impairment is too substantial to allow for his permanent exercise of authority. Judith comments that God "never made Max for facing truths permanently"[77] and fervently hopes that his flash of self-knowledge might not be permanent. Indeed, Max only asserts his authority on a single point: he insists on nursing his friend through diphtheria, which he promptly catches. His illness turns him into a "maimed child" again,[78] and he dies after a short infection, leaving Judith to provide for their children. This she does at the cost of her own happiness: because her oldest son is exactly like his father, Judith forces herself to marry Churton Graves, rather than Sandy Muir with whom she has been in love for years, so that her son will have the money which alone can make the life of a neurotic bearable. "I failed as a man"[79] is Max's summary account of his own life.

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[74] PM p. 336.
[75] PM p. 343.
[76] PM p. 337, PM p. 340.
[77] PM p. 338.
[78] PM p. 351.
[79] PM p. 352.

The Main Findings of the Fourth Chapter

The male characters examined above, like the male characters examined in the second chapter, all facilitate the protagonist's ascension to a position of power, and their very weakness encourages Anne, Priscilla and Judith to display a wide range of masculine attributes (such as financial astuteness) and to claim the corresponding privileges (financial supervision). However, the impaired men of *Miss Brown*, *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten* and *Poor Max* all differ in a vital point from those examined in the second chapter: they suffer from a genetic, and therefore permanent, weakness of body and character, whereas the impaired men analysed previously were without exception only temporarily impaired.[80]

When contemplating these two sample groups, one of the most obvious differences is the fact that the novels discussed in the second chapter have a (qualified) happy ending where the plot is resolved by a romantic union, whereas the heightened degree of impairment examined in this chapter causes a catastrophe which is resolved only by death.[81] This correlation between the degree of impairment of a male character and the outcome of the novel is exciting, because it is not easily accounted for. Impairment dramatically increases the female protagonist's range of motion, and even in the novels examined in this chapter, the protagonists benefit from their partners' inability to oppress them. They develop a range of masculine attributes, and the narrators at no point suggest that this is in itself a bad development – not even Iota's narrator in *Poor Max*, from whom one might have expected some chastisement of the protagonist's usurpation of a man's role. After all, *Poor Max* was written only four

[80] Arthur and the poet suffer from a temporary illness but recover; the Tenor and Evelyn are temporarily deluded about the gender of their New Woman partners but are eventually undeceived, and more traditional gender relations are re-established.

[81] Of the many men I read as polluted characters in New Woman fiction – Walter Hamlin of MB, Dunstane Momerie of YLHE, Cecil Marriott of WoG, Courcy de Smith of Lucas Malet's *The Far Horizon*, Colonel Tempest of DT, and Hugh Scarlett of RP, among others – the only novel that does not end with the actual death of either the polluted man or the protagonist is *Miss Brown*, but Anne's spiritual death is very much implied.

years after *A Yellow Aster*, which is highly critical of the protagonist's mother's masculine, scientific mind. This difference suggests that Iota's attitude towards women who fulfil male functions either changed dramatically, or else that she perceived the necessity for this behaviour differently depending on how her protagonist was partnered: while it is unseemly for Gwen to emancipate from Humphrey Strange, Judith's usurpation of her husband's role is virtually the only chance for survival that the Morland family has, and it is treated with corresponding lenience. Although *Poor Max* distinctly conveys the feeling that Iota was criticising male weakness, Judith herself, like Anne and Priscilla, is elevated to the status of a heroine, even a saint, rather than a usurper. While this sanctification of the protagonist also played a role in the sickroom episodes examined in the second chapter, in analogy to the male character's impairment the protagonist's elevation in those cases was only temporary, and the positive ending of the novels depended on the return of both characters to traditional gender roles.

This finding mirrors what Elaine Showalter has observed with regard to an earlier period, namely that

> feminine novelists . . . presented the permanently handicapped man as feminine in the pejorative sense, [whereas] they believed that a limited experience of dependency, frustration, and powerlessness – in short, of womanhood – was a healthy and instructive one for a hero.[82]

However, in the case of the above novels this "experience of womanhood" is not limited, because the male protagonists of *Miss Brown*, *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, and *Poor Max* simply cannot recover from their genetic weakness. Accordingly, instead of a limited period of re-association in which the bounds of possibility are extended by a temporary gender role reversal, the protagonists have to continue to perform in the role of a man ad infinitum (practically, until the death of either partner), and they grow so exceedingly tired with this complete and permanent role reversal that

[82] Showalter, "The Woman's Man", p. 150.

all three briefly consider elopement with a dominant man who seems capable of restoring them to their traditional place in the gender binary. Dick Brown, Stephen Malden and Sandy Muir are all characterised as "manly" in the traditional sense of that word, and all three explicitly promise "rest" to the protagonist, and vouch to take care of her.[83] Because of this structural similarity, I propose that novels such as the ones examined in this chapter unwittingly show the limits of the concept of the impaired man as a blueprint for the New Man. Although many New Women writers apparently felt that impairment was necessary to enable their protagonists to transcend the societal limitations placed on her, the attempt to emancipate female protagonists by maiming male characters is a difficult strategy.[84] In all of the above cases, the predominant effect of the polluted man on the protagonist is not a positive increase of her self-reliance (although that is one of his effects), but rather an intense longing for rest – a desire to enter into a traditional relationship and to end emancipation. This is at first glance disappointing, at least from a feminist point of view. However, I want to suggest that it is not emancipation per se from which the protagonists in the above novels shrink, but rather the specific road to emancipation which the authors considered here chose for their protagonists.

Of course the idea of emancipation – of women's self-dependence – is in itself a significant diversion from the life plan of previous generations, and there are novels among those discussed here which represent even that self-dependence as a burden

[83] The direct comparison between the polluted man and the traditional man in these novels again emphasises the tendency of many New Women protagonists to fantasise about a functioning traditional gender binary, and proves that the concept of impairment often accidentally created a heightened need for traditional structures, even if the protagonist foregoes the return to old patterns in all three cases. A similar constellation can be found in Mary Cholmondeley's RP (in which the polluted Hugh Scarlett is opposed to the manly Richard "Dick" Vernon) and Netta Syrett's *A Day's Journey*, which opposes Cecily Kingslake's polluted husband Robert to her adorer Richard "Dick" Mayne.

[84] Dorothy Mermin has come to a similar conclusion in her analysis of the poetry of Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She argues that the "punitive reversal of roles or rejection of men" which characterises Rossetti's *Goblin Market* and Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* is not a good solution to the dilemma these poets faced when trying to reconcile their own position as female poets with the poetic tradition that assumes the dialectic of a male poet and a female muse. (Mermin, "The Damsel and the Knight": p. 80.) To the problematic implications of maiming male characters to further the protagonist's emancipation cf. also Showalter, "The Woman's Man", esp. p. 150.

under which the protagonist suffers. Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* is a case in point.[85] However, many authors achieve their protagonist's emancipation by making her responsible for an impaired (a polluted) man. This specific way of empowering the protagonist meant that not only was she suddenly self-reliant, but she was also burdened with the added responsibility for a "big child"[86] – the impaired man. This double strain proves too much for Priscilla, at least, while Anne and Judith seem doomed to lead long, unhappy lives.

Adding to this double responsibility is the fact that the polluted man, and in moderation the impaired man, often elicit motherly feelings rather than romantic attachment. This is not surprising if we consider how many of the novels observed in this work contain passages in which the protagonist, although she is a "real" New Woman,[87] is attracted to a dominant man. Apparently New Women writers did not find it easy to divorce themselves from the patterns of attraction which governed their parent generation, and impaired male characters, although useful for proving that the protagonist can and should be self-dependent, always ran the risk of being seen – and loved – as children, rather than as (new) men. The emancipation of a New Woman protagonist by the help of an impaired male character leaves the protagonist with a double responsibility (where before, in her traditional gender role, she had none), and at the same time mars her partner's attractiveness.

An additional complication of the concept of the impaired man arises in the case of cross-dressing episodes. Several critics have drawn attention to the fact that the emotional attachment between the disguised female protagonist and the impaired man can easily be interpreted as veiled homosexual desire on the part of the impaired man. In the cases of *The Heavenly Twins* and *Gloriana*, Ann Heilmann has argued that the

[85] However, even Mary Erle would presumably have fared better if her small income did not have to support her dependent younger brother.
[86] Cf. PM p. 262.
[87] I borrow Loralee MacPike's term again here: MacPike, "The New Woman and Childbearing": p. 379.

protagonist's male companions "masquerade" as heterosexual men, a masquerade that becomes difficult to uphold as they fall in love with their cross-dressed partners. Her reasoning is that New Women authors

> projected the socially and sexually transgressive nature of transvestism (a metaphor for feminism) on to the deviant male; it is for this reason that female cross-dressing in New Woman fiction frequently turns into an implicit exploration of homosexual desire.[88]

Based on my observations on the concept of impairment, I suggest that one can also read the attraction between, for instance, the Tenor and the Boy, as "reversed heterosexual". The Tenor is attracted to the Boy, in my reading, not because of same-sex attraction, but because the Boy complements the Tenor's own feminine side.[89] This is an accidental effect of balancing Angelica's masculine attributes with the complicit performance of a feminised man. Rather than masquerading as a heterosexual man, as Ann Heilmann suggests,[90] I propose the Tenor is masquerading as a *man* in the same sense in which Angelica "cross-dresses" as a woman for church, when her real character qualifies her for the opposite role. By deduction, this makes the desire between them heterosexual, but with reversed roles.[91]

These problems with the concept of the impaired man – his absolute dependence and resulting unattractiveness, and the "homosexual" implications of his love for the "masculine" New Woman protagonist – manifest on the level of the plot, and they are difficult enough for the individual author to negotiate, as the examples of unconvincing,

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[88] Heilmann, "(Un)Masking Desire": p. 94.

[89] Martha Vicinus suggests that the episode may also be read as "a groping toward an expression of lesbian love". Martha Vicinus, "Turn-of-the-Century Male Impersonation: Rewriting the Romance Plot", in Andrew H. Miller and James Eli Adams (eds.), *Sexualities in Victorian Britain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 203. This reading likewise presupposes a reading of the Tenor as a woman masquerading as a man.

[90] There is some debate as to whether effeminacy was or was not a part of the nineteenth-century "definition" of the homosexual. Barbara Tilley thinks not (Tilley, "New Men?", p. 4.) whereas Jennifer Beauvais believes it was (Beauvais, "Between the Spheres", p. 44.). Heilmann's reading is certainly based on the idea that feminine attributes in a man suggest a homosexual orientation.

[91] In this connection, a reading of Olive Schreiner's SAF might bring significant results, for Lyndall at one point says about the character Gregory Rose: "[t]here . . . goes a true woman – one born for the sphere that some women have to fill without being born for it". (SAF p. 164). Since SAF at numerous points associates Lyndall with masculine attributes, Gregory's attraction to her can therefore likewise be interpreted as "reversed heterosexual": Gregory, who is a true woman, loves Lyndall, who is a true man.

"anaemic"[92] recoil episodes in the second chapter of this work have shown. However, there are structural problems with this approach as well: as I have hinted above, the frequent pairing of strong New Women characters with weak impaired men does not abandon the binary code, but rather reverses it. I will argue in the following chapter that it was this reversal of the gender roles which caused many of the New Woman's contemporaries to react with such disgust to her novels. The fiction of the impaired man, in my reading, did not just affect the outcome of the New Woman's search for the New Man, but had cultural repercussions as well. In addition, the next chapter contains my discussion of the changes that New Women wrought on the binary code of the sexes through their specific ways of creating male characters.

[92] In my reading, Norma Clarke's description of Arthur Brock as "anaemic" can be applied to other previously impaired, reinstated men, such as, for instance, Evelyn of *Gloriana*. They seem bloodless, in my reading, because their final cast is a result of the author's recoil from their previous depiction. Clarke, "Feminism and the Popular Novel": p. 103.

CONCLUSION

> The social situation that created the New Woman in effect deconstructed woman. The New Woman required altered constructions.[1]
>
> Loralee MacPike

The thought expressed in this argument by Loralee McPike is almost a staple of New Woman criticism. The fiction of this era addresses, often in expressly polemic language and with the decided purpose of stimulating change, an impressive range of political and social institutions that disadvantaged women. The list of topics which New Women protagonists of diverse novels bring into focus ranges from the law of coverture to the Contagious Diseases acts, from the insufficient general education of girls to the insufficient moral education of boys, and from matters of suffrage to vivisection, with an indeterminate number of more subsidiary and highly individual causes in between.

In accordance with this peculiarity of the genre's orientation, criticism on New Woman fiction often examines an author's stance on a particular and concrete matter – such as, for instance, Mona Caird's position on the issue of marriage. My thesis has taken a slightly different approach. Rather than examining the actual social constructs that New Women novels tried to alter, I have attempted to uncover the structures that lie beneath the New Woman's political objectives. It has been my argument that the generation of women writers whose fiction played a significant role in shaping the literary landscape of the *fin de siècle* was a generation that was highly aware not only of the tangible disadvantages of women, but also of the attitudes that had created these disadvantages. Although I do not wish to posit that New Women writers were necessarily aware of the intricacies that I have traced here, the surprising similarity between many male characters of New Woman fiction points towards a systematic

[1] MacPike, "The New Woman and Childbearing": p. 372.

attack on the ideology that presupposed women to be essentially different from men, and worth less than them.

However, as my examination of a selection of New Women novels has shown, arriving at these "altered constructions" which the New Woman needed was not a straightforward process. The aim of the novels discussed here, insofar as one can impose a unified aim onto a body of fiction as diverse as this, was to change the way society thought about women in the abstract. But this alteration can be achieved in a number of very different ways, of which two have been examined in detail here. Some New Women authors argued that the sex-specific character attributes of women, although diametrically opposed to those of men, should be valued identically. Although this approach necessitates a revaluation of the concept of woman, it leaves the binary opposition between the sexes intact; it aims to achieve equality yet insists on gender difference. Other authors argued that there are no sex-specific character attributes at all – that men and women are essentially the same, and therefore worth the same. This process necessitates a redefinition of the concepts of masculinity and femininity – more precisely, it necessitates the creation of female characters who act either like or as men.[2]

In either case, it was inevitable that the New Woman's altered constructions should affect the concept of femininity just as much as that of masculinity. This interdependency of the masculine and the feminine roles as dictated by the binary code goes some way toward explaining why the construction of male characters in New Woman fiction often reveals more about the New Woman protagonist than about the different types of men she encounters. I share this understanding of the interconnectedness of male and female characters with the New Women writers themselves. Although Hugh Stutfield has complained, with a hint of injured vanity, that

[2] *Like* men in what I have here examined as sickroom episodes, *as* men in cross-dressing episodes. Ann Heilmann likewise maintains that "New Woman writers, arguing for women's rights on the grounds of their essential sameness, suggested in their cross-dressing narratives that women could, in fact, become men". Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 117.

the New Woman's man was always depicted "as a blackguard or an idiot, or both, sometimes diseased, always a libertine and a bully",[3] the body of New Woman fiction simply does not support his notion. What this thesis has shown, among other things, is how important men have been to the New Woman movement, as antagonists, but also as allies, as helpmates, and as ideals. The contemporary foreword to Lady Florence Dixie's utopian novel *Gloriana* illustrates this:

> [t]he reader of [these] pages will observe the Author's conviction, everywhere expressed, that Nature ordains the close companionship, not division of the sexes, and that it is opposition to Nature which produces jealousy, intrigue, and unhealthy rivalry. "Gloriana" is written with no antagonism to man. Just the contrary.[4]

This view was widespread among New Women writers, and the interdependence between the New Woman protagonist and the male characters who surround her has been commented upon by other critics as well. Regenia Gagnier, for instance, has pointed out that in opposition to New Women protagonists created by men,

> Women-created New Women were not so rigidly independent. They wanted autonomy, individual development, but they wanted it through relationship. New Women literature primarily analyzes feelings in relationships.[5]

This thesis supports Gagnier's notion. I have examined several types of male characters with whom New Women protagonists enter into a relationship, and I have argued, in each case, that the specific ways in which these characters were created fulfilled a function within the novel and for the protagonist. On the following pages, I will briefly revisit the different types of male characters that I have described here to determine what effects, if any, New Woman fiction had on the Victorian conceptions of man and woman.

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[3] Stutfield, "The Psychology of Feminism": p. 116.
[4] GL p. ix.
[5] Regenia Gagnier, "Individualism from the New Woman to the Genome: Autonomy and Independence", *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 1.1 (2003), pp. 103-28: p. 106.

Revaluation and the Binary Man

It is my argument in the first chapter that the depiction of certain male characters as binary – as traditional in their attitude towards the gender roles, yet crucially corrupted – contributed substantially to the process of familiarising readers with the New Woman protagonist, and at the same time served to justify the New Woman author's condemnation of Old Men. This necessity of justification should not be underestimated, for the belief in the ideology of separate spheres for men and women was wide-spread even during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and any attempt to reconstruct such a crucial part of society must of necessity have created unrest and fear. Whatever the New Woman thought of him, the ideal of the binary man had evolved for a reason, and his nature was tied up with ideas about the order of the world as a whole, the prosperity of the British state and even the will of God – an impressive set of regulators, each powerful enough on its own to block any and all changes to the prevalent system. Since change was what the New Woman wanted, the burden of proof was on her. What reason had she to depart from a system that had structured British society through the age of Britain's greatest expansion, and how could her one-sided attempt to restructure the code be anything but a death blow to the institution of marriage?[6]

My research suggests that the binary man was created independently in a wide range of New Women novels as an answer to this reproach. By depicting a character who embraced the traditional notion of gender roles, but who was at the same time compromised by flaws which were untenable even in the eyes of a traditional reader, many New Women authors sought to undermine society's appreciation of this type of man. The male characters examined in the first chapter of this study all justify their infidelity, their arrogance and their cruelty by pointing to the binary code – by

[6] This was a frequent accusation. Cf. for instance the attack on Mona Caird's 1888 article "Marriage", published in *The Westminster Review*. Re-published in: Carolyn Christensen Nelson, ed., *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), pp. 185-99.

suggesting, explicitly or implicitly, that they have licence to behave as they do because they are men. In *The Daughters of Danaus*, Hubert Temperley lies to Hadria because he assumes that as a man, he is intellectually superior to her, and therefore obliged to decide for her. Daniel Maclure argues in *The Beth Book* that "what faults I have are a *man's* faults",[7] yet his faults include adultery, stealing, lying, and compromising doctor-patient confidentiality. In Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman*, the motivation for Vincent Hemming's selfish proposal of marriage that ruins Mary Erle's life is his desire to keep Mary within patriarchal structures:

> the spectacle of Mary's childish face and busy, nervous little hands rearranging her destiny in her own decided fashion . . . touched him, and, at the same time irritated him, producing the feeling that, as a man, he was bound to interfere.[8]

In *From Man to Man; or, Perhaps Only...*, Frank's hunting instinct also informs his attitude to women, with catastrophic results. Evidently, or so New Women authors argued, raising men along the lines of the code inevitably led to their corruption.

By contrast, the novels examined in the first chapter all contain passages in which feminine attributes outshine masculine attributes, and not on account of women's stereotypical superior morality, but because the feminine approach – whether emotional, soft, patient or of a composite nature – is either a more efficient response to the problems at hand, or simply because the binary man's approach causes massive damage to innocent bystanders, be they animal or human. The figure of the binary man thus allowed the New Woman author to explain why she found it necessary for her protagonist to depart from the traditional pattern of relationships, why she risked "illegibility" rather than conform to the demands of the code, and why she would prefer her protagonist to be an odd, even a superfluous woman, to her being a binary wife.

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[7] BB p. 522.
[8] SMW p. 77.

The idea that women were collectively in charge of rescuing men with a chequered past (the term *fallen men* tellingly does not exist) is one that New Women were confronted with, and it was no easy task for them to refuse this responsibility. "Helping up" the "child-man" is one of the central points of the New Woman agenda that Sarah Grand had so famously established in her 1894 article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question",[9] and it is difficult to draw a distinct line between the New Woman's self-allotted responsibility of bettering the male sex in its entirety, and the traditional method of marrying one to effect his reformation at the price of personal happiness. However, the plot line traced here in *The Beth Book*, *From Man to Man*, *The Daughters of Danaus* and *Red Pottage* is designed to disarm those critics who hold that women's supposed moral superiority was best applied in her own small circle. In all of these novels, the protagonist's failure is programmatic: although Beth, Rebekah, Hadria and Hester all conform (against their nature) to the binary feminine role, none achieves a betterment of her partner. By placing the protagonist firmly within the binary through displaying selected, traditionally feminine attributes, I suggest that New Women authors blunted the edge of the criticism that could be directed at their views,[10] while at the same time achieving a revaluation of the traditional notions of man and woman by comparing feminine attributes positively to masculine ones.

[9] Grand, "The New Aspect": p. 273.

[10] Sarah Grand illustrated this principle in her own person by cultivating an image of ladylikeness that made it very difficult for her critics to dismiss her as unwomanly (what Heilmann calls "[t]he 'Grand' strategy of seduction", in Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 31.). Apparently Grand excelled in this, as is evidenced by the fact that she was once, much to her delight, warned by a "dear old gentleman" not to read HT. Quoted in: Bonnell, "The Legacy of Sarah Grand": p. 467. In this context, consider also Judith R. Walkowitz's account of Mrs Weldon's life in Judith R. Walkowitz, "Science and the Seance: Transgressions of Gender and Genre in Late Victorian London", *Representations* 22 (1988), pp. 3-29. Norma Broude has seen a similar tactic at work in the life of painter Mary Cassat, and argues that "resistance on the one hand and simultaneous complicity on the other [was] a pattern typical of many Euro-American women artists and intellectuals . . . during the 19th century". Norma Broude, "Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman or the Cult of True Womanhood?", *Woman's Art Journal* 21.2 (2000), pp. 36-43: p. 36.

Re-association and the Impaired Man

In this thesis, I have proposed to consider a number of male characters in New Woman fiction as impaired, rather than as new. This interpretation of the feminised man in New Woman fiction partly contradicts earlier criticism of characters such as Arthur Brock (*The Beth Book*), the Tenor (*The Heavenly Twins*) and the poet of George Egerton's "A Regeneration of Two", all of which have previously been interpreted as New Men, or at least New Men candidates.[11] In several cases, my definition even contradicts the authors' own evaluations.[12] However, this digression from earlier criticism is justified by the centrality of the impaired man's function for the protagonist, and the resulting focus in all novels examined here on his impairment (and not on his "newness").

I defined the impaired man as a male character who is prevented from living up to the traditional standards of binary masculinity, meaning, in essence, a man who cannot take a position of superiority and power over the protagonist because of circumstances that reduce him from the status of a "full" (traditional) man. Instead, he displays a range of traditionally feminine attributes. Impairment appears in many different shapes in New Women novels,[13] but, regardless of its shape, the impaired man's deficient masculinity leaves room for the New Woman protagonist to fill. While a protagonist who attempts to widen the sphere of her actions in a relationship with a binary man could easily be seen as imposing and "mannish", the impaired man invites the same development, because he profits from his partner's acquisition of those masculine attributes which he has been forced to abandon. By portraying impaired men

[11] Cf. for instance Forward, "The 'New Man'". Forward refers to Arthur Brock as "a New Man" (p. 443), calls the Tenor "a great man – selfless and good" (p. 440), and quotes the designation of the poet as a "new type of man" given in Egerton's RoT (p. 445).
[12] For instance, Mona Caird refers to Professor Fortescue as a New Man in DoD: "[a]ll the old hereditary instincts of conquest and ownership appeared to be utterly dead in him. No wonder he had found life a lonely pilgrimage! He lived before his time". DoD p. 201. HT makes a similar claim for a range of characters (Dr. George Galbraith, Lord Dawne, David Julian Vanetemple (the Tenor), Theodore Hamilton Wells (Diavolo), and Mr Kilroy). I am inclined to follow Ann Heilmann's verdict that Diavolo is easily the most feminist of these, cf. Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies*, p. 61.
[13] In variations, it appears in earlier works as well, as Elaine Showalter's research has shown. Cf. Showalter, "The Woman's Man".

who actually profit, rather than suffer, from their partner's empowerment, I propose that many New Women novels successfully evaded some of the criticism that their novels would otherwise have attracted.

However, these novels also explicitly challenge the traditional notion of maleness, both by introducing male characters whose masculinity is suffused by recognisably feminine attributes, and by suggesting that traditional maleness is nothing but a role – a culturally determined (but otherwise random) collection of attributes, which are furthermore frequently found in (new) women as well. The two types of situations examined in the second chapter – sickrooms and cross-dressing episodes – both expose the artificiality of the binary attribute clusters. If a woman can overcome her supposedly natural weakness in cases of emergency or provocation, there is no reason to assume that weakness is a natural feminine attribute. Instead, readers are forced to conclude that although many women display weakness in voluntary compliance with the code (perhaps to gain the benefits and privileges of their sex, as Gwen Waring suggests in *A Yellow Aster*),[14] weakness is not a natural attribute of woman. Gabriele Pamperl has argued that

> New Women perform gender counter to society's expectations of natural feminine behaviour and thus they destabilize the seemingly fixed gender roles assigned to the sexes according to their physical anatomy".[15]

In addition, the complicit performance of the impaired man, especially in the cross-dressing episodes examined above, likewise complicates the reader's notion of the natural opposition of the sexes and their attributes. When paired, the impaired man and the empowered protagonist therefore pose a serious challenge to the binary code.

It is worth noting again that the novels considered in the second chapter all end sharply after that character's impairment is removed. Although Elaine Showalter has

[14] Cf. AYA pp. 163-4.
[15] Pamperl, "The Subversion of Gender", p. 21-2.

pointed out that temporary impairment is often created as an "instructive"[16] experience for male characters, there is scarcely an episode in New Woman fiction which actually depicts the effect of this instruction on the formerly impaired man.[17] In *The Beth Book*, for instance, Arthur's illness allows him to witness Beth's extraordinary strength and determination, of which he was previously ignorant. Then the couple briefly separates on account of Arthur's uneasiness with the role reversal; specifically, he is repulsed by the idea that Beth might be associating with the "unsexed crew that shriek on platforms".[18] Platform speaking, of all things, is just what Beth embraces as her true vocation during Arthur's absence. How will the couple deal with that when Arthur comes back?

What was the daily life of the Duke and Duchess of Ravensdale like? *Gloriana* relates that they were married, and that they died, but, in Jessamine Halliday's words, "there is such a dark place between"[19] these two events. There is no novel among the sample taken for this study that manages to fill this dark space.[20] Gloria was prime minister – did Evie raise the children? In Egerton's "A Regeneration of Two", would the poet's high-minded insistence on freedom in his relationship with Fruen survive unscathed if she chose a different lover after a month? The conspicuous regularity with which New Women novels refrain from showing a New Woman's actual romantic

[16] Showalter, "The Woman's Man", p. 150.
[17] Cf. for instance Casey Althea Cothran's warning that "[a]lthough some celebratory, utopian-like works of fiction were written during this period, many of these narratives exist in short story format and often end before the culmination of the narrative action . . . Even the most seemingly celebratory works often contain elements of omission, retraction, or renunciation". Cothran, "Love, Marriage, and Desire", p. 8. Ann Heilmann points out that the "glimpses readers are allowed of an egalitarian relationship between mature, well-matched and 'healthy' partners . . . only rarely promote the viability of sexual relations between women and men in the present. Significantly, Schreiner's most famous allegory, 'Three Dreams in a Desert' (1890), posits separatism, not sexual passion, as the gateway to freedom and thence to future companionship, and *From Man to Man* breaks off at the precise point at which New Woman meets New Man". Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 85.
[18] BB p. 552.
[19] ASW p. 33
[20] Olive Schreiner's inability to write a definite ending for Mr Drummond and Rebekah in MtM – she sketched two different versions, but finished neither – may in part be due to this reluctance to portray actual New Men/Women teams. Describing Frank's aberrations, by contrast, seems to have been unproblematic.

interaction with a New Man in daily life (rather than her interaction with an impaired man during his sickness or delusion) suggests that New Women authors found it difficult to imagine exactly how such a union would work. Instead, the impaired male characters that I have examined here are all reinstated, in one way or another, into traditional masculinity before initiating a romantic relationship with the protagonist. This circumstance further contests the notion that impairment led to the creation of positive New Men characters. Neither was it an unproblematic shortcut to emancipation, as the phenomenon of heroic men, and especially that of polluted men proves.

The Heroic Man and the Phenomenon of Recoil

In certain New Women novels, traditional masculinity is not devalued, but on the contrary highly praised by the narrator and the protagonist. The existence of these novels is a thorn in the side of many critics, who have tried to define "real" New Women novels and to separate them from those which merely use the New Woman time as a "backdrop".[21] My reading of *Kith and Kin*, *Diana Tempest*, and *A Yellow Aster* in the third chapter of this work complicates this approach by suggesting that one should not interpret these novels as anti-feminist cuckoo's eggs – that is to say, as novels which use New Woman elements as a "backdrop" merely to castigate their protagonists more effectively for digressing from the path of traditional womanliness. Instead, I have read these novels as a commentary on more radical novels of the same period. I have justified this approach by pointing out that the security and rest which the positive traditional man instils in the protagonists of these three novels is a state that many of the protagonists of other New Women novels are longing for with equal ardour.

Considering the period of time under observation here, one might feel inclined to conjecture that the return to "old patterns" that characterises *Kith and Kin*, *Diana Tempest*, and *A Yellow Aster* has a certain psychological cogency. The New Woman suggested no more and no less than a departure from the traditional courtship and attraction patterns of her parent generation – patterns with which she herself had grown up. By suggesting that traditional men were defective, and incompatible with the truly "New" Woman, New Women writers purposely wrote their protagonists out of the legibility of the established code. This is a risky undertaking, and emotionally taxing for the protagonist thus condemned to exemplary solitude. George Egerton's protagonist in *The Wheel of God*, Mary Desmond, summarises this position as follows:

[21] Both are Loralee MacPike's terms. Cf. MacPike, "The New Woman and Childbearing": p. 379.

> I think I am just like a little child with a puzzle; I am . . . knocking down all my old wooden men; and I have not yet found new ones to replace them. It will be rather lonely when I get into a ninepin land of my own, where no one understands my game or wants to learn it.[22]

As the example of many New Women novels shows, this was not an unfounded fear. "There is no place in all the world for you" Dark Essex tells the eponymous protagonist in Ménie Muriel Dowie's *Gallia*, "You are not wanted because you are for no use".[23] However, in the novels considered here, heroic men make uncompromising use of the modern woman by interfering with her (unloved) life plan, and by forcing her back into the code. The fiction of the heroic man periodically glosses over the deep breach that New Woman writing had torn between Old Men and New Women.

From a modern perspective, it is perhaps difficult to accept that the tendency to recoil is wide-spread in New Woman fiction, but this perspective is hampered by historical distance and by the inevitable superciliousness of later-born generations which Olive Schreiner, for one, actually foresaw:

> [y]ou will look back at us with astonishment! You will wonder at passionate struggles that accomplished so little; at the, to you, obvious paths to attain our ends which we did not take; at the intolerable evils before which it will seem to you we sat down passive; at the great truths staring us in the face, which we failed to see; at the truths we grasped at, but could never quite get our fingers round. You will marvel at the labour that ended in so little; – but, what you will never know is how it was thinking of you and for you, that we struggled as we did and accomplished the little which we have done; that it was in the thought of your larger realisation and fuller life, that we found consolation for the futilities of our own.[24]

Reading certain novels of the New Woman period as reactions to the anxieties caused both by "real New Women" and by their fiction, as I have done here, has the potential to avoid exclusions and inclusions of the kind which have characterised the reception history of Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*. As critics, we must beware of rashly pronouncing the novels examined here to be "unenlightened", or "anti-feminist". They

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[22] WoG pp. 121-2
[23] Ménie Muriel Dowie, *Gallia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1895), pp. 196-7.
[24] Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), pp. 29-30.

are not straightforwardly so, and neither is there great merit in determining exactly how "new" a novel of the *fin de siècle* must be to count as New Woman fiction. The construction of masculinity in New Woman writing reveals the contradictory desires of its authors: it bespeaks both the desire for greater freedom and emancipation of *fin-de-siècle* women writers, as well as their desire for safety and "compatibility" which so continuously disrupts even the progressive New Women novels examined in the first two chapters of this work. The positive Old Man examined in the third chapter can be read as a (unconscious) commentary on the period's prevalent characterisation of men as either brutal or helpless. Although both the "husband-fiend" and the impaired, feminised lover fulfil an important function in New Woman fiction, both lead the protagonist into emotional turmoil and force her into emancipation. The heroic man exerts a very different kind of force: one that returns her to the traditional gender role of woman, and thereby ends her oddity without making drastic demands on her strength.

It is telling that in comparison to "real" New Women novels, the novels I have examined in the third chapter of this thesis seem by and large to lack the means with which to fascinate a modern audience. I believe there is a direct connection between this circumstance, on the one hand, and the unexpected praise of chivalry and of a "functioning" binary code in these novels on the other hand. To anyone interested in proving a linear and seamless relation between the beginnings of organised feminist consciousness and these early predecessors, recoil in whatever shape is certainly disappointing.[25] Notwithstanding this, I suggest that what other critics have referred to

[25] For critics who have voiced disappointment with this feature of New Woman writing, cf. for instance Lyn Pykett's analysis of what she terms the "recuperative narrative": Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine*, pp. 158-63. In her early account of New Woman fiction, Gail Cunningham has also expressed consternation at the fact that the women-authored protagonist of this genre often "suddenly and inexplicably marries the wrong man, makes an initially successful bid for freedom and then collapses into crushing conformity". Cunningham, *The New Woman*, p. 106. Ann Ardis refers to novels with this type of plot as "boomerang books" (Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, p. 140.), and cautions that feminists need to take into account that "women [authors] as well as men were acting as cultural custodians and 'gatekeepers' in the 1890s". Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, p. 155. My reading of recoil as a tendency that disrupts especially women's writing of this period supports Ardis' notion.

as “unreal” New Women novels, and what I would prefer to call recoil novels, are valuable sources of the world view of this threshold generation. Although the fiction of the heroic man was in some sense an escapist fantasy, the ever-recurring desire for rest from self-responsibility was a part of the New Woman movement, just as decidedly as its courageous struggles were. Nowhere is this thought expressed more clearly than in the novels that I have examined in the fourth chapter of this work.

The Polluted Man and the Limitations of Impairment

At first glance, the novels I have examined in the fourth chapter closely resemble those analysed in chapter two, in that they all contain episodes in which a strong female protagonist supports a weak man through a period of illness. However, they differ crucially in the length of that period. In *Miss Brown*, Walter Hamlin was born weak and will die weak, as the narrator emphasises. Anne says about her future marriage to him:

> he must remain so for ever; he was born all these things. She could prevent his growing worse, she could not make him grow better; her position would be as that of a woman who devoted herself to nurse a person sick of an incurable disease: there would be none of the excitement of a possible cure, only the routine, the anxiety peculiar to a case where the patient is for ever on the brink of getting worse.[26]

The perpetual sickroom is also a motif in Annie E. Holdsworth's *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*: Priscilla herself judges that she is "bound for life to a weakling, a faint outline of man".[27] The only escape from this destiny (since she refuses to leave Dunstane) is an early death. In *Poor Max*, Judith Morland says to her dying aunt: "I believe I should like to go with you . . . years and years of scooping little children out of fires! . . . Oh, how tired one will get!"[28]

In my view, the type of character which I have referred to here as the polluted man points to a structural problem inherent in impairment. Although the maiming of a male character seems to be a shortcut to emancipation, since it removes his masculine privilege and leaves space for the New Woman protagonist to grow into, an excess of impairment all but nullifies these positive effects. Impairment, far from creating a reliable partner for the protagonist, actually burdens her with a responsibility that galls her emancipation, and it tampers with the male character's attraction in crucial ways. The permanently impaired man is not sexually attractive to the protagonists of *Miss*

[26] MB p. 309.
[27] YLHE p. 68.
[28] PM p. 284. This is after Judith has decided to treat her husband as one of her children; she especially anticipates having to scoop him out of various fires in the above quotation.

Brown, *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten* and *Poor Max*, rather, he appeals to her motherly instinct.[29] However, this appeal is not an adequate replacement for romantic love, as all three protagonists come to realise. Judith rhetorically asks "[O]ne demands the best in one's beloved, doesn't one?"[30] Permanently impaired male characters are emphatically not the "best", although they are valuable as plot devices that explain the protagonist's emancipation. This observation suggests that the impaired man is less a progressive concept of New Manhood, and more an auxiliary structure to renegotiate gender roles: his survival (in cross-dressing episodes, his delusion) is proof of the New Woman protagonist's strength and determination; at the same time, his feminised masculinity not only perpetually endangered his attraction for the New Woman protagonist,[31] but also presented an uncomfortable challenge for contemporaries.

[29] For another example not discussed here, cf. RP, where the narrator argues that Rachel West "could not repulse [Hugh Scarlett] any more than she could repulse a child", that "[s]he was stronger than he, and perhaps she loved him more than she could have loved an equal", and concludes that there is "an element of mother-love in the devotion which some women give to men" (RP p. 141).
[30] PM p. 279.
[31] As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have argued, "when the sexes battle, sex itself (that is, eroticism) changes". Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Sexchanges", *College English* 50.7 (1988), pp. 768-85: p. 768. However, it seems that patterns of eroticism and attraction did not always change simultaneously with the New Woman's intellectual and political progress.

The New Woman's Attempts to Renegotiate the Binary Code of the Sexes

Before I can enter into the discussion of the challenges that the New Woman's depiction of masculinity presented to her contemporaries, as well as to the binary code of the sexes, it is necessary to dwell for a moment on the nature of the above conclusions, particularly insofar as they suggest the existence of a grid that structures male characters in New Woman fiction into four distinct categories – binary, impaired, heroic, and polluted. It has not been my intention here to posit any such grid, much less one in which four different types of male characters are clearly distinguishable. What my reading of New Woman fiction *does* suggest is that many authors of this genre had a marked tendency to depict traditional masculinity as corrupt, and to envision the New Man as an impaired man who furthers the protagonist's emancipation. I have tried to describe these two opposing tendencies, and also to describe the difficulties that arose from such a depiction, by drawing attention to the fact that traditional masculinity is not always depicted as evil, nor is impaired masculinity always depicted as strictly positive. Far from turning my observations on the binary and the impaired man into a holistic system, heroic and polluted male characters actually complicate my observations on the depiction of masculinity in New Woman fiction.

Furthermore, although I have ordered characters according to what I perceive as their primary function in the novel, a closer observation of these characters in all cases reveals composite and even contradictory elements in their makeup. To give but two examples, *The Heavenly Twins'* Colonel George Colquhoun, although he has been identified by Emma Liggins as "a husband-fiend", respects Evadne's decision not to consummate their marriage on account of his illness. He even grows to regret his past lifestyle[32] – a marked difference from other characters interpreted as binary in my study. And in Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage*, the narrator refers to Hugh Scarlett's nature

[32] HT (vol. 2) p. 136.

as permanently impaired – Hugh himself confirms this judgement – yet he is beloved by the protagonist Rachel West, and in that respect does not resemble the polluted husbands examined in the fourth chapter. Accordingly, although the terms I have chosen for these different types of male characters seem to suggest a closed system that makes an effort to contain New Woman fiction, it has not been my intention to suggest that such a system exists. What I have meant to suggest throughout is that certain groups of male characters in New Woman fiction have a similar impact on the plot and on the protagonist, and this similarity has urged me to enquire into the structures that were being attacked by this very particular manner of writing masculinity. To conclude my observations on the New Woman's attempts to renegotiate the binary concepts of man and woman, it is imperative that I return my attention to these underlying structures.

It has been my working hypothesis that many New Women authors created their male characters to contest the binary code of the sexes in two of its arbitrary points: the valuation of the concepts man and woman, and the content of their relative attribute clusters; and that these two processes, which I have termed revaluation and re-association, were set in motion by binary and by impaired male characters. The body of my thesis has supplied evidence for this hypothesis, yet in the process a number of limitations have come to the fore which merit closer observation. Contrary to the limitations addressed above, which affected the plot and were consequently resolved or conceded to within this same plot (for instance, recoil can be read as a concession to the limited romantic potential of the impaired man), the following observations are structural, and they pertain to cultural effects, rather than to effects that can be observed within the fiction itself. As before, the following considerations therefore contain an element of philosophical speculation.

The Effects and the Limitations of Revaluation

In this thesis, the term revaluation stands for a particular approach to reconstructing the binary code of the sexes which takes as its starting point the relative valuation of the concepts man and woman. Revaluation takes for granted the attribute cluster traditionally associated with women, but attempts to elevate the attributes in this cluster against their binary opposites by showing how the traditional woman's approach is superior to the traditional man's. This way of cleansing the attribute cluster of woman from negative valuation is not factually opposed to the binary code at all. It simply asks for recognition of the intrinsic positive valuation of the sex-specific attributes of woman, without attacking the structure of the cluster as such. This uneasiness of parting with the attribute clusters of the binary code, or, to formulate it positively, this attachment to and celebration of womanly attributes, in my reading serves the purpose of making the protagonist and her view of life "palatable"[33] to a heterogeneous audience. Yet, from a modern point of view, revaluation is beset by (at least) two problems: firstly, revaluation cannot (and makes no effort to) break with biological essentialism, and secondly, revaluation poses the threat of reversing, rather than balancing out, the respective valuation of men and women.

The portrait of the binary man, such as it is in the novels examined here, does not attempt to contest the notion that men and women have a range of sex-specific attributes, and that they therefore form contradictory opposites. Rather, the depiction of traditional masculinity in the novels examined here aims at convincing the reader that men and women are naturally and crucially different, but that women are not therefore inferior. This particular argument does nothing to increase women's range of motion, it only (ideally) ensures that they are valued positively so long as they move in their traditional sphere.

[33] This is Kristin C. Ross's term. Cf. Ross, "Female Education and the New Woman": p. 76.

The second problem inherent in this approach is related to the biological essentialism on which revaluation rests. Because the explicit juxtaposition of the New Woman protagonist and the Old Man continues to presuppose a binary opposition of men and women, it has no means of escaping hierarchical valuation: if we follow Derrida's analysis of binary thinking, then the "best" that revaluation can hope to do is to reverse the valuation of men and women. It can turn the master into the slave, and the slave into the master, but it cannot create equality.[34] In New Woman fiction, the habitual pairing of a superior New Woman protagonist with a man who is, in Hugh Stutfield's terms, "a blackguard or an idiot, or both",[35] obviously did not result in an unvalued binary code, but simply exchanged the poles of valuation.[36] For these reasons, the particular approach of many New Women writers to greater equality between the sexes (what Elizabeth MacLeod Walls has called the "domestic feminism" of the New Woman)[37] can seem dowdy and dispirited from a modern point of view.

However, revaluation had this advantage for the New Women authors who employed it: that it allowed them to include both their more timid sisters and their own mothers in the movement.[38] In a time when "revolting daughters"[39] were routinely pitched against their mothers in the popular press, elevating traditional femininity allowed New Women writers to forge alliances in unlikely places. It is also worth mentioning that, in many of the novels examined in this thesis, the protagonist's

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[34] Some contemporaries, like George Egerton and the feminist radical Frances Swiney, admitted frankly that they believed in women's superiority. Swiney, who was active in Malthusian and Eugenic organisations, argued in 1907 that "men were a 'defective variation' of the female gene". This is an extreme reversal of valuation, but logically consistent with revaluation. Swiney is quoted in: Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 22.

[35] Stutfield, "The Psychology of Feminism": p. 116.

[36] Elaine Showalter has referred to this process as "the inevitable outcome of the sexual specialization of Victorian society". Showalter, "The Woman's Man", p. 149.

[37] Walls, "New Woman and the Rhetoric of British Modernism": p. 229.

[38] Many New Women novels explicitly include the protagonist's mother in the project of revaluation. BB, DoD, DT, GL, GoP, HT, KK, WoA and WoG all examine the submission of the protagonist's mother to her binary role.

[39] Ann Heilmann explains that this term originated in "a periodical press debate in 1894 about the generational conflict between mothers and daughters, to which many readers of both generations contributed their views." Cf. Ann Heilmann, "The New Woman in the New Millennium: Recent Trends in Criticism of New Woman Fiction", *Literature Compass* 3.1 (2006), pp. 32-42: p. 32.

revaluation against the binary man is situated before her forays into independence. This structure suggests that perhaps revaluation can be interpreted as the first step to resist the implications of the binary code, whereas re-association (the attempt to deny gender difference and thereby to increase the range of attributes women were "allowed" to have), because it is the more radical step, often lies after the protagonist's location in traditional femininity. Jacques Derrida likewise suggested that binary pairs must be reworked in two phases, which Christie MacDonald has summarised as follows:

> [i]n the first phase a reversal was to take place in which the opposed terms would be inverted. Thus woman, as a previously subordinate term, might become the dominant one in relation to man. Yet because such a scheme of reversal could only repeat the traditional scheme (in which the hierarchy of duality is always reconstituted), it alone could not effect any significant change. Change would only occur through the 'second' and more radical phase of deconstruction in which a 'new' concept would be forged simultaneously.[40]

Revaluation could be seen as the practical expression of this first phase. It is essentially a permutation of the binary code, and indeed it achieves only a repetition of the traditional scheme by elevating the valuation of woman at the expense of man.

Perhaps reversing the hierarchy of the concepts man and woman was essential for the self-esteem of the New Woman's generation, and Derrida may even be correct in arguing that a "reversal" was the first step on the road to developing new concepts. Be that as it may, revaluation, although it successfully shifts the valuation of the concepts, does not discard them or even change the contents of their attribute clusters. It is therefore a limited renegotiation of the binary code of the sexes, and one that remains, in Ann Heilmann's terms, "clogged by essentialism".[41]

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[40] Jacques Derrida and Christie V. McDonald, "Choreographies: Interview", in Nancy J. Holland (ed.), *Feminist interpretations of Jacques Derrida*, Re-Reading the Canon (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 31-2. Note that Derrida himself has explained that he only hypothesised these two phases for the sake of clarity, Derrida and McDonald, "Choreographies", p. 33.

[41] Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 45. Heilmann is referring to Egerton's "celebration of the 'eternally feminine' principle" here, which, as she argues, "replicated rather than challenged patriarchal thinking about women". I agree.

The Effects and the Limitations of Re-association

The term re-association in this thesis denotes the process of creating female and male protagonists who display a range of attributes hitherto associated exclusively with the opposite sex. Re-association is a very radical process. It often led to characters which jarred with the Victorian notion of gender: to female protagonists who were challengingly male, and to male characters whose "deficient" masculinity confused and outraged contemporaries.

I have argued above that many New Women authors made use of the concept of impairment in order to soften the radicalism of their masculinised female protagonists. Through the fiction of the dependent man, many New Women writers were able to claim masculine attributes and privileges for the protagonist while at the same time protecting her from the charge of usurping her male partner's "natural" rights. However, the impaired man often introduced a set of problems into the novel which, although diametrically opposed to the problems that the binary husband posed, was no less difficult to face. Some of these problems affected the plot directly, and have been examined under the heading of pollution.[42] But there is a more crucial problem still, which, as I will argue on the following pages, had an effect on the cultural repercussions of New Woman fiction.

Re-association assigns to the impaired man the dependent, weakened and passive role hitherto reserved for women, while his female partner occupies the (positive) position of the strong, capable and active partner. Similar to revaluation which achieves only a reversal of valuation, but keeps binary thinking intact, this particular configuration of empowered protagonist and impaired male partner does not abandon binary thinking, but only exchanges the attribute clusters (the roles) of the two concepts. The resulting "new" binary is tragically beset by the same difficulties that

[42] Cf. my conclusion to the fourth chapter, pp. 183-6

characterised the old one. The protagonist successfully counters her partner's lack of physical and mental strength (that is, his "femininity") with her own abundant strength, yet she cannot suppress the feeling of superiority and disdain which this constellation inspires. Especially in the novels examined in chapter four, the role of each partner therefore remains crucially and inextricably connected to the complicit role of the other, and their relationship is characterised not by equality, but by dependency and superiority – the very definition of a binary. I would like to suggest that this failure to break with binary thought structures, which expresses itself in the pattern of the impaired man and the empowered New Woman that was so prevalent in New Woman fiction, had a crucial impact on society's perception of the New Woman.

Contemporary parody indicates that *fin-de-siècle* sensibilities by and large failed to read the New Woman as a new type of *woman*. Instead, many people seemed to assume, in mock or real terror, that she was halfway to a sex change – a sex change that, in binary logic, would inevitably force men to change into women. Punch's "Angry Old Buffer" complained in 1895:

> [a] new fear my bosom vexes; / Tomorrow there may be no sexes! /
> Unless, as end to all pother, / Each one in fact becomes the other.[43]

The reversal of sex roles seems to me to be the primary target of *fin-de-siècle* parody of the New Woman genre – not the idea that sex roles would dissolve altogether, and men and women become indistinguishable, but the fear that the traditional roles would be reversed. This fear was accidentally confirmed by the concept of the impaired man. The construction of masculinity as impaired furthered the contemporary belief that New Women simply wanted to take over man's role while reducing men to the former status of women, instead of reworking gender roles outside of such binary dependencies. The surprising number of works from this period which rely on gender role reversal for their effect supports this reading. For instance, Elaine Showalter points out that "[in *The*

[43] An Angry Old Buffer (Anonymous), "Sexomania", *Punch* 203 (1895): p. 203.

Revolt of Man (1882), Walter] Besant could only imagine a society of complementary roles, of dominance and subordination".[44] Mona Caird's 1899 essay "Does Marriage hinder a Woman's Self-Development", Mary Cholmondeley's 1909 play "Votes for Men", Sarah Grand's 1894 novel *Singularly Deluded*, Marie Corelli's 1889 short story *My Wonderful Wife*, and Violet Hunt's novels *The Maiden's Progress* (1894) and *A Hard Woman* (1895), to name but a few of many examples, also employ comic role reversal as an easy and direct way to carry their point,[45] as does the satiric photograph of the New Woman's "Wash Day" (Fig.1). Although some of these examples employ role reversal to support women's emancipation, and others were supposed to show the folly of women's emancipation, all of them envision the future of gender relations in (reversed) binary terms. In addition, many particularities of the *fin de siècle* seemed to reinforce this specific interpretation of the New Woman's aims: the campaign for rational dress,[46] for instance, which threatened to eliminate the easy optical differentiation between men and women, caused a seemingly endless stream of parodies in Punch,[47] and for a number of reasons, dandyism, a contemporary style of masculinity whose most notorious representative was Oscar Wilde, evoked similar fears of blurred gender lines that threatened to evolve into a complete reversal of roles, rather than their dissolution.[48]

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[44] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 43.
[45] Cf. Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, pp. 44-5 for the examples of Caird and Cholmondeley.
[46] Various attempts to rationalise women's dress had been made since at least the middle of the century, with varying focus and intensity. Amelia Bloomer's early forays in America, and the Rational Dress Society established in London in 1881, were aimed at greater convenience and better health for women, but in doing so they suggested an adaptation of feminine dress to masculine dress. To this topic cf. for instance Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2003), esp. chapter seven, "Fashion, Dress Reform, and the New Woman" (pp. 203-23).
[47] Ann Heilmann discusses a number of these parodic cartoons in *New Woman Fiction – Women Writing First-Wave Feminism*, in her first chapter "Contesting/Consuming Femininities". Cf. Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, esp. pp. 15-22.
[48] Dandyism celebrated a style of masculinity that appeared effeminate to contemporaries. On the connections between the New Woman and the dandy, cf. Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s", in Lyn Pykett (ed.), *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions* (London: Longman, 1996). Also cf. Teresa Mangum, "Style Wars of the 1890's: The New Woman and the Decadents", in Nikki Lee Manse and Meri-Jane Rochelson (eds.), *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the*

Fig. 1: "The New Woman - - Wash Day" presents the observer with a vision of future gender relations that perpetuates, even while it reverses, binary opposition.[49]

1890's (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994). Also cf. Lisa K. Hamilton, "New Women and 'Old' Men: Gendering Degeneration", in Talia Schaffer and Kathy Alexis Psomiades (eds.), *Women and British Aestheticism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

[49] Underwood & Underwood, "The New Woman - - Wash Day", New York: c1901.

This particular depiction of the future of heterosexual relationships suggests, firstly, that men and women continued to be perceived as binary opposites through the *fin-de-siècle* period, and secondly, that because of this lasting belief in the incommensurability of the sexes it was widely assumed that the only possible change in gender relations was a complete exchange of gender roles (a change that is logically consistent with binary thinking).

Because of this peculiar perception of her contemporaries, the concept of impairment not only frustrated the New Woman's attempts to create creditable New Men, but also sabotaged her attempts to reconcile the public (or at least the press) with the changes she envisioned. For her contemporaries, re-associating masculine attributes masculinised the New Woman and threatened to force men into a complicit revolution that would not result in better men (as the New Woman claimed), but simply in feminised men.[50] As Warne and Colligan point out in reference to one of the many parodies that Punch Magazine launched during the *fin de siècle*, a "gender switch produces humor, but it does not disrupt or reconfigure gender relations or hierarchies; instead, it temporarily reverses them".[51] Barbara Tilley has likewise pointed out that "when paired together as lovers or as wife and husband, the New Woman and the New Man appear as idiotic and clownish"[52] – at least they did appear so in contemporary parody.[53] More than a complete abandonment of gender roles could have, the suspicion

[50] Feminised men or, in the terminology of Gilbert and Gubar, "no-men": "[T]he rise of the New Woman was not matched by the coming of a New Man but instead was identified (in the imaginations of both men and women) with a crisis of masculinity that we have imaged through the figure of the no-man". Gilbert and Gubar, "Sexchanges": p. 769. Barbara Tilley likewise argues that the "images in the popular press that capture this tension between the New Man and the New Woman emphasize the submissive and, therefore, feminine position of the man in relation to the powerful and controlling position of the New Woman". Tilley, "New Men?", p. 3. For a more positive view of the feminised man cf. Jennifer Beauvais' thesis on the gender role transgression of the bachelor figure in four Victorian novels: Beauvais, "Between the Spheres".
[51] Warne and Colligan, "The Gendering of New Woman Authorship": p. 41.
[52] Tilley, "New Men?", p. 4.
[53] "In contemporary parody" is my addition, but I assume this is what Tilley means.

that New Women meant to reverse them struck contemporaries as a sin against nature: as bizarre, perverted, or at the very least, ludicrous.

It seems obvious from a modern point of view that New Women writers did not intend a simple and complete reversal of the gender roles. As a rule, they were (or cleverly professed to be) terrified of the idea that their protagonists might be perceived as "mannish", and very few would have entertained for a moment the idea that women were turning into men.[54] However, the specific way in which New Woman fiction tended to reconstruct the gender roles through revaluation and re-association actually supported the view of her opponents by suggesting not that men and women were alike strong and sensitive, and of equal value, but that the New Woman was either the positive binary other of the valueless Old Man, or the strong binary other of the weak impaired man. Especially the peculiar practice of impairing male characters to justify the New Woman's display of positively valued, masculine attributes retained the reading of these attributes as gendered, and locked both male and female characters in reverse binary structures. Of course these characters marked a radical departure from the *traditional* binary code. But in other ways, they inadvertently perpetuated binary thinking. This conclusion invites speculation: would there have been a way to abandon the code altogether? How would a New Woman novel have to be different if it was to discard the binary code, instead of merely reworking it? And how would an abandonment of binary thinking have affected gender relations?

[54] Much of the New Woman's time was spent refuting this view. Cf. for instance a passage from Sarah Grand's personal letters, quoted by Martha Vicinus: "[a]ll I meant by the term 'New Woman' was one who, while retaining all the grace of manner and feminine charm, had thrown off all the silliness and hysterical feebleness of her sex . . . I never could have meant the vulgar creature who now passes for the approved type of New Woman. Woman was never meant to be developed man". Vicinus, "Rewriting the Romance Plot", p. 207. Michelle Elisabeth Tusan furthermore notes that "[t]he feminist vision of the New Woman was not the mannish and overly sexualized New Woman popularized in novels and mainstream periodicals of the 1890s but a symbol of a new female political identity that promised to improve and reform English society". Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, "Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics during the Fin-de-Siecle", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 31.2 (1998), pp. 169-82: p. 169.

From Contradictory to Contrary Dichotomies

In the introduction, I argued that there are three arbitrary points in the construction of any binary code: firstly, the pairing of the concepts; secondly, the contents of attribute clusters; and thirdly, their valuation. I suggested that these arbitrary points can serve as starting points for a reconstruction of any binary code. In the specific case of the binary code of the sexes, the questions that can be asked in order to unravel the construct are: firstly, are men and women really binary opposites; secondly, do all individuals really, always and exclusively, connect to those attributes that are currently designated as belonging to their biological sex; and thirdly, are those attributes currently designated masculine objectively and consistently better than those currently designated feminine? The New Woman answered "no" to the latter two questions through re-association and revaluation, respectively.

However, while in the novels examined here cluster formation and valuation were both questioned with great frequency, it must be observed that none of the examples collected have attempted to eliminate the first, and most basic, arbitrary assumption of the binary code of the sexes: the idea that men and women form a binary pair. Yet how could New Women have broken out of the contradictory dichotomy[55] of man and woman? It seems only fair, at the ending of a work that discusses the New Woman's failure to discard the binary code of the sexes, to conjecture briefly about ways in which she might have succeeded.

I speculated in the introduction that binary opposition is created through the attribute clusters that attach to the relative concepts. The association of strength with the concept of man, and the complicit association of weakness with woman, is what defines these two concepts as binary opposites. It is therefore only logical to assume that the

[55] "Contradictory dichotomy" is Nancy Jay's term for what has been called, in this thesis, the binary opposition of the sexes. Cf. Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy": p. 44.

reverse process – the disconnection of attributes from their concepts – would dissolve binary opposition. However, although many of the New Women novels I have examined here successfully disassociate strength from the concept of man by creating weak men and strong women, the outcome of this process, at least in the eyes of contemporaries, was surprisingly not an ending of binary opposition, but a reversed binary that juxtaposed masculinised women and feminised men. This finding suggests that the long association of strong with the concept of man had resulted in a gendering of the attribute as such. Around a hundred years before the New Woman's time, the manifold social upheavals of the eighteenth century had created a climate in which the incommensurability of the sexes was a cherished fiction, but when the New Woman began to take issue with it, this fiction had to some extent ossified: towards the end of the Victorian period, to be strong apparently *was* to be masculine, and as a consequence, the creation of strong female protagonists confused and upset many contemporaries. The particular path to emancipation which many authors chose for their protagonists, namely, the introduction of an impaired man, did nothing to further the de-gendering of attributes; it only reversed the old roles, and suggested to many contemporaries that although New Women contested the valuation or association of certain attributes, binary opposition, and with it, the gendering of attributes, remained a constant in one way or another.

It follows from these considerations that in order to avoid locking their characters in a binary or a reversed binary, New Women writers would have had to undo the gendering of attributes, to prevent contemporaries from reading a strong woman as a masculine woman. This could have been achieved, I propose, by creating male and female characters who have an equal share in the same attributes, and who display them at the same time. New Woman fiction itself is not unaware of this. For instance, in *The Daughters of Danaus*, Hadria muses:

> [w]hen a woman as generous as [Professor Fortescue], as just, as gentle-hearted, had appeared on the horizon of the world, the advent of a nobler social order might be hoped for. The two were necessary for the new era.[56]

Mona Caird here names three attributes, of which two – just and gentle-hearted – will likely be perceived as gendered (masculine and feminine, respectively). Through Hadria, Caird conjectures that a relationship between two people who display masculine and feminine attributes at the same time would mark the beginning of the "new era" that New Woman fiction speculated about with such fervour. Coincidentally, this is also the Boy's definition of genius in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*.[57]

However, there is no novel among the sample taken for this study which presents the reader with such a pairing. Instead, many protagonists of New Woman fiction are either paired with dominant and corrupted men, and react with gentleness and patience to their tyranny, or else their relationship with a dependent and emotional man draws out their strength and self-dependence.[58] Throughout, the pattern remains the same: softness on the one side is mirrored by hardness on the other, and the binary balance is preserved at all times through the complicit performance of the partners.

Conversely, if New Woman fiction had habitually paired strong, sensitive female characters with strong, sensitive male characters, the effect would arguably have been a gradual de-gendering of the attributes strong and sensitive.[59] If the New Woman had created unions in which both partners display masculine and feminine attributes interchangeably (say, in response to outward stimuli, rather than as a response to their

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[56] DoD p. 202.
[57] Cf. HT (vol. 2) p. 209.
[58] In a surprising number of cases, these two different constructs can be found in one and the same novel, as the protagonist's interactions with a binary man are contrasted to her interactions with an impaired/polluted man. Novels which arguably contain both impaired and binary male characters in my reading include ASW, BB, DoD, GL, HT, MB, MtM, PM, RP, SAF, WoA, WoG, and YLHE.
[59] Anne Heilmann argues that Mona Caird was perhaps the most advanced of the New Women writers in this particular sense: "Mona Caird linked her vision of a socially caring society not to women's reproduction, but to the nurturing capacities of both sexes". Heilmann therefore calls her one of the "voices who warned against feminist essentialism" and the resulting overvaluation of the concept of woman. Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 144.

partner's complicit performance), her contemporaries might not have been so quick to misread strong women protagonists as "mannish".

This misreading of the New Woman as masculine woman is not an incidental affair. Consider how the phrase "a masculine woman" seems intuitively wrong, as if the individual in question were acting against nature. However, if we pause to question the phrase, we observe that the suggestion of wrongdoing actually originates on the level of attribute gendering – meaning in the domain of culture, and not that of nature. What the phrase really means is a woman who acts with strength, determination, or whatever other attribute is coded masculine in the culture under consideration. In short, the practice of labelling attributes "masculine" and "feminine" taboos a wide range of positive attributes for each sex, on the basis of a cultural fiction. For in reality, "feminine" attributes are of course common in men, and the other way around, as Gayle Rubin has pointed out in her influential essay "The Traffic in Women":

> [f]ar from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities. It requires repression: in men, of whatever is the local version of 'feminine' traits; in women, of the local definition of 'masculine' traits. The division of the sexes has the effect of repressing some of the personality characteristics of virtually everyone, men and women.[60]

Although the gendering of attributes such as emotional and strong is nothing but a cultural practice, contemporary reactions to New Woman protagonists show that the influence of this cultural practice on the individual's perception of reality must not be underestimated. What is more, this coding of attributes as either masculine or feminine, and the resulting belief in their sex-specificity, is by no means a phenomenon of bygone days. In 2003, a group of researchers conducted an experiment on the connection between grammatical sex and reality perception which proves this fact. In this survey, Lera Boroditsky, Lauren A. Schmidt and Webb Phillips asked native speakers of

[60] Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), *The Second Wave – A Reader in Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 40.

German and of Spanish to name adjectives they associated with the noun "bridge". This noun was chosen because its gender is feminine in German, but masculine in Spanish. Interestingly, each group described the same (inanimate and certainly sexless) object with attributes that, in their perception, matched its grammatical gender: native speakers of German described it as "beautiful, elegant, fragile, peaceful, pretty, and slender"; speakers of Spanish described the same object as "big, dangerous, long, strong, sturdy, and towering".[61] In the context of my work, this study has an interesting accidental result, namely, the fact that even in 2003 – more than a hundred years after the New Woman's heyday – the heads and participants of this study apparently agreed without difficulties on the gender association of a wide range of attributes.[62] The researchers even describe the process of rating the "degree of maleness" of the individual attributes chosen by the participants, yet this process, since it is not part of the study's research goal, remains unexamined.[63] All the same, Boroditsky et al conclude that it is "striking that even a fluke of grammar (the arbitrary designation of a noun as masculine or feminine) can have an effect on how people think about things in the world".[64]

The New Women authors I have examined here tried to counteract this effect by attempting to renegotiate the binary code of the sexes, and the gendering of attributes, but their tendency to depict men as "bullies" or "puppets", and the respective complementary performance of the protagonist, accidentally reproduced binary thinking structures, rather than subverted them. If these authors had chosen a different way of discrediting Old Masculinity, and of emancipating their protagonists, this might have had an effect on the population's perception of character attributes as innately gendered, and this altered perception could in turn have undermined the tendency of Western

[61] Lera Boroditsky, Lauren A. Schmidt and Webb Phillips, "Sex, Syntax and Semantics", in Dedre Gentner and Susan Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Language in Mind: Advances in the Study of Language and Cognition* (Cambridge: A Bradford Book, MIT Press, 2003), p. 70.
[62] Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips, "Sex, Syntax and Semantics", p. 69.
[63] Cf. Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips, "Sex, Syntax and Semantics", p. 70.
[64] Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips, "Sex, Syntax and Semantics", p. 77.

culture to think of men and women in binary terms. Conversely, the way in which many New Women writers depicted heterosexual relationships, as the attempt of two partners to "balance" each other under all conditions, suggests that many of them were not sure how to conceive of attraction unless in binary terms.

In truth, one might wonder how gender relations would be affected by the abolition of the binary code of the sexes, if it could be achieved. Based on the suspicion that only "opposites attract", conservative voices from the New Woman's period to our own have argued for the artificial perpetuation of contradictory gender opposition.[65] Paradoxically, insofar as the abandonment of gender difference seems to deny the possibility of unified gender subjectivity, this same matter is also a concern of radical feminists.[66] However, to argue for the de-gendering of character attributes, as I have done above, is not to posit the necessity of an ending to gender difference per se. As both Nancy Jay and Elizabeth Grosz argue, the imperative is not to arrive at an end to the opposition between men and women as such, but rather to arrive at an opposition that does not presuppose the incommensurability of the sexes: one that is not contradictory, but only contrary. Elisabeth Grosz, summarising an argument by Moira Gatens, has argued that society must arrive at "a non-oppositional notion of difference"[67] between the sexes. Nancy Jay has challenged feminists to redefine contradictory opposition as contrary opposition wherever they can (or, in Jay's terms, to transform A/Not-A dichotomies into A/B dichotomies).

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[65] Ann Ardis has argued in 1990 that "the nostalgia for sexual difference is a second-order phenomenon, a symptom of a more primary and general anxiety about the ability to order the world through the manipulation of language". Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, p. 28.

[66] I address this matter here in part because the attempt to define the nature of opposition between men and women raises the question of gender difference and sameness, and that question has long been a bone of contention within the feminist movement. In truth, revaluation and re-association themselves embody this difference. The process of revaluation holds, as radical feminism came to argue in the 1960s and 70s, that women are essentially different from men. Re-association, like liberal feminism, instead suggests that there are no sex-specific attributes – that "gender" is an entirely artificial construction.

[67] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 10.

Based on the findings of this work, it seems that the first step in arriving at such a modified notion of difference would be to abandon the practice of speaking – and thinking – of positive human character attributes as either "masculine" or "feminine". They are neither, and to designate them so has the power to pathologise individuals who happen to possess positive attributes of the "opposite" sex. If the New Woman had achieved a discontinuation of this practice, it is likely that her protagonists would have been perceived as women – not as unnatural half-men – and over time, the notion of difference between the sexes might have developed form a contradictory to a contrary one. Such a notion of difference is illustrated, for instance, in Dorothy L. Sayers 1947 essay "The Human-Not-Quite-Human", in which she argues: "the fundamental thing is that women are more like men than anything else in the world. They are human beings".[68] This definition establishes an A/B dichotomy by emphasising both difference *and* similarity. It introduces no valuation, does not enforce an excluded middle, and bears reversing: men and women are neither identical, nor are they binary opposites. It is exactly the kind of definition that Jay has asked feminists to strive for.[69]

New Woman fiction did not arrive at such a notion of difference. It did not successfully abolish the binary code of the sexes. The challenging construction of maleness that contemporaries perceived in this body of fiction – both the challenge of the impaired man's "effeminate" masculinity, and the challenge of the empowered protagonist's "masculinised" femininity – has its origin in the failure to discard binary thinking, and the resulting inability to transcend the gendering of attributes.

[68] Dorothy Leigh Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (1947) (Grand Rapids: Wiliam Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), p. 53. Gayle Rubin made a similar argument in "The Traffic in Women": "I personally feel that the feminist movement must dream of even more than the elimination of the oppression of women. It must dream of the elimination of obligatory sexualities and sex roles". Rubin, "The Traffic in Women", p. 54.

[69] Elizabeth Grosz has likewise submitted that "arriving at a nonoppositional notion of difference . . . is useful, perhaps necessary, to reformulate male and female relations". Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 10.

However, the New Woman's lack of success in abolishing the binary code must not be judged harshly, for the pertinacity of the gender binary is not a problem which is relegated to the distant past. It is not a problem that has been solved since the New Woman's time, and to which our own culture can therefore look back with a comfortable sense of superiority. The very fact that I have here been able to rely on the reader's knowledge of "masculine" and "feminine" attributes presupposes at the very least a working comprehension of their historical gender associations, and from the fact that we still have gender-specific sections in toy stores,[70] I would argue that this comprehension is more than merely historical. It is true that the social ostracism which the New Woman had to face is no longer to be feared in the same measure; all the same, growing up as a "masculine" girl requires a tremendous degree of resilience even today, and this would not be so if men and women formed a contrary dichotomy that allowed for continuity between the sexes. Contradictory opposition, which castigates strong New Women protagonists as unnatural and emotional New Men as effeminate, is precisely what New Women writers failed to dissolve in their reconstruction of the binary code of the sexes. The way to achieve this, I have argued above, would have been to attempt a de-gendering of character attributes, for so long as character attributes are perceived as sex-specific, no individual is truly free to develop his or her character independently of traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.

I would like to think that this conclusion is not an end in itself, a closing remark on the mistakes of a past age, but that it will instead encourage a more attentive use of language even in our own time. It is often no more than a little linguistic negligence that perpetuates the gendering of attributes, and it can come from the most unexpected of

[70] The typical colour-coding of these sections in pink and blue is an interesting example of the arbitrariness of attribute association, since "pink for girls" is a relatively recent consensus. Before the twentieth century, if children were clothed in sex-specific colours at all, it seems to have been more common to dress girls in blue (perhaps on account of that colour's association with the Virgin Mary) and boys in pink, since pink was considered the bolder and more decisive colour. Cf. for instance the article "Cost of the American Baby", *The New York Times* March 26, 1905.

places. In 1984, feminist Esther Newton asked in an article on the New Woman writer Radclyffe Hall:

> [w]hy should we as feminists deplore or deny the existence of masculine women or effeminate men? Are we not against assigning specific psychological or social traits to a particular biology?[71]

On the basis of the findings of this work, I would go further, and argue that even the terms "feminine man" and "masculine woman" must ultimately vanish from our language, for they suggest that the old binary is still accessible to us – that we are still conditioned by our culture to realise when a person is re-associating attributes that he or she is not supposed to display under the binary code. This notion is exactly what New Women authors attempted to challenge, because it curtails the freedom of the individual, man and woman alike. And if they were unsuccessful in creating New Men – in creating male characters that are patient and emotional, and yet remain legible as men – we must do better, or we have learned little from them. For why should we, as a culture, call an emotional man a "feminine" man? Unless we succumb to the logic of the binary code, the proper term for an emotional man is "an emotional man".

[71] Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman", *Signs* 9.4 (1984), pp. 557-75: p. 574-5.

APPENDIX: SYNOPSES

of lesser known New Women novels I have examined here

Chapter I: Revaluation and the Phenomenon of the Binary Man

Red Pottage, Mary Cholmondeley

Red Pottage describes a period in the lives of two friends, Rachel West and Hester Gresley. After a wealthy childhood during which they have become friends, Rachel's father, an iron monger, dies and leaves his family destitute. Rachel moves to the East End and begins to support herself. In the meantime, Hester grows up to be a promising New Woman author. The two continue to be friends and Hester supports Rachel as best she can with a share of her pin money. During this time, Rachel is courted and deserted by a man of the upper class. After several years, Rachel suddenly inherits a vast fortune from her late father's business partner. She enters polite society again, but is considerably changed by her experiences, especially by the abandonment of her former lover. She then meets Hugh Scarlett. Scarlett is a weak and neurotic man who has had an affair with Lady Newhaven, but is attempting to break it off by the time he meets Rachel. However, Lord Newhaven, who noticed the affair, demands satisfaction. Because Scarlett is too afraid to duel, Newhaven bullies him into drawing lighters, with the agreement that whoever draws the shorter lighter is obliged to kill himself during the following six months. Hugh loses. During the six months he has left to live, he becomes passionately attached to Rachel, who loves him in return although she is well aware of his weaknesses, and when the time has elapsed, Hugh refuses to commit suicide. Lord Newhaven, who had expected this, commits suicide instead, but informs his wife in a letter that Hugh had drawn the shorter lighter. Lady Newhaven, distraught about Hugh's new attachment to Rachel, confronts her with this. Hugh had told Rachel

of his affair with Lady Newhaven but had lied about this one detail – drawing the shorter lighter – and in consequence, Rachel loses her faith in him and throws him over, whereupon Hugh kills himself in despair. Rachel, who has had a turn of heart in the meantime, is too late to save him.

During the same half year of Rachel's and Hugh's attachment, Hester Gresley is living with her brother, parish priest James Gresley, and is busy completing her second novel which is eagerly awaited by the public. However, James burns the only copy after reading it without permission, because he is unable to accurately judge its merit. The novel, as far as Cholmondeley's readers can make out, contains a strong critique of the bigotry of the church, by which James feels personally attacked. Hester loses her mind over the shock and hovers between life and death at the very time when Hugh Scarlett commits suicide. However, directly Hester hears of Rachel's loss, she leaves her bed and grows healthy again caring for Rachel. The epilogue reveals that Rachel later marries Richard Vernon, a traditionally-minded but positive male character who had wooed her from the beginning. Rachel and Richard move to India, and Hester continues to live with Rachel and her family.

A Superfluous Woman, Emma Frances Brooke

Jessamine Halliday is a spoilt young woman of the upper class who has been carefully prepared to marry well by her traditional aunt. However, Jessamine is disgusted with the idea of marrying the morally and physically corrupt Lord Heriot. She goes through extreme phases of activity to take her mind off her situation, until she enters on a phase in which she imagines herself mortally ill. It is then that she meets the novel's narrator, Dr Cornerstone, who alerts her to the plight of the working poor to cure her of her imaginary illness. However, Jessamine only pounces on the idea for abstraction, and Dr Cornerstone is partly amused and partly indignant. When her suitor Lord Heriot

proposes, Jessamine absconds on a philanthropic excursion among a Scottish farming community instead of accepting directly, but plans to return to do so later. While in Scotland, Jessamine falls in love with the farmer Colin Macgillvray, but Colin's simple approach to love and courting reveals the entire fatality of Jessamine's upper-class conditioning. She toys with the idea of a free union and motherhood, but eventually collapses under the pressure of society's (assumed) outrage. She abandons Colin and returns to London, and shortly thereafter accepts the second proposal of Lord Heriot. A period of nine years elapses, during which Jessamine bears two disease-riddled and weak-minded children. She attempts to reform Lord Heriot and is a faithful wife to him until her strength collapses during her third pregnancy, at which point she calls on Dr Cornerstone, who attempts to convince her to leave her husband. However, Jessamine feels responsible for the children's deformities and refuses to leave. After her oldest daughter kills her son in the nursery and dies herself under suspicious circumstances, Jessamine decides to kill her unborn child through sheer will. She succeeds and dies as well, while Lord Heriot has not many months to life – the House of Heriot is extinguished. Dr Cornerstone relates her story to his wife and his friend Mr Carteret, the three agree that only women's emancipation can prevent cases like Jessamine's.

Chapter II: Re-association and the Phenomenon of the Impaired Man

Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900, Lady Florence Dixie

About 13 years before the events of the novel, Speranza de Lara was married against her will to Lord Westray, but eloped with Harry Kintore. They had a daughter, Gloriana de Lara, but Westray eventually found the couple and shot Kintore. At the beginning of the novel, Gloria is an extraordinarily gifted young woman who decides to liberate women by cross-dressing and going into politics on their behalf. With the support of her mother, Gloria enters Eton as "Hector D'Estrange". Hector performs outstandingly at

Eton and later at Oxford, and begins to agitate for women's enfranchisement with an "Essay on Woman's Position". He embarks on a political career directly his education is over, and with Speranza begins to organise clubs for women ("Women's Volunteer Companies"), where girls receive engineering classes and partake in physical exercise, and from which Hector plans to recruit a paramilitary organisation to support women's cause in the event of a revolution. He is elected into parliament, and the novel summarises the next four years, during which he successfully carries a bill for women's suffrage.

During the same space of time, Lord Westray briefly recaptures his ex-wife Speranza, but Hector and his best friend Evelyn, Duke of Ravensdale, follow and confront him. During this episode Hector shoots at Lord Westray without killing him, but Westray stages his own death and goes into hiding, ordering an underworld character by the name of Trackem to give directions to the burial ground of a nameless corpse dressed as Westray to Scotland Yard a few years later. Hector is arrested after the corpse is found buried on his mother's grounds. During the trial, Hector reveals that he is Gloriana de Lara. She is sentenced to death, but rescued by the women's regiment. Gloria then remains in hiding until she is abducted by Lord Westray who attempts to trade her life for Speranza's hand in (re-) marriage. Before she can be rescued, Westray drowns in a storm, and Evelyn Ravensdale, who deems Gloria drowned as well, vows to fulfil her political mission. He forms the Second D'Estrangeite Cabinet and re-introduces a bill for the enfranchisement of women that Hector D'Estrange had introduced to the House of Commons years ago; this time, it passes the House of Lords. In this hour of triumph for the women's cause, Gloria is discovered to be alive, and returns to London to be re-installed as Prime Minister. An epilogue set in the year 1999 informs the reader that Gloria and Evelyn were married, and that their joint political

actions have abolished poverty throughout London. The entire novel is presented as the dream of a chieftain's daughter called Maremna.

A Girl of the People, L. T. Meade

A Girl of the People is a very short novel. Its action spans only eight weeks in the life of Elizabeth "Bet" Granger, the protagonist, beginning with the death of Bet's mother. Bet's father James Granger is a violent drunkard, who conspires with the like-minded Isaac Dent to force Bet into marriage with Dent. Bet has sworn to her mother that she would protect her young brothers Nat and Thady from their father, to which purpose she abducts them, and accepts an offer of marriage from the sailor William Scarlett, with whom she is in love. Through Isaac Dent's scheming, Scarlett is accused of thievery and arrested on the morning of Bet's wedding day. Simultaneously, James Granger tracks down his sons and abducts them in turn. All of her plans thus thwarted, Bet promises to marry Dent if he releases Scarlett from prison, and begins to search for her brothers. While she tries to reconcile to the idea of marrying Dent, Mother Bunch, a burly Irish woman, and Hester Wright, a slum singer and cousin of Scarlett's, frustrate Dent's scheme by kidnapping him and forcing him to confess his crime. He and James Granger are forced to leave the city, William's name is cleared, and Bet and William are married after all.

Chapter III: The Heroic Man and the Phenomenon of Recoil

Kith and Kin, Jessie Fothergill

The protagonist of *Kith and Kin*, Judith Conisbrough, is born into genteel poverty, but has spent her life in the belief that her family would eventually inherit the fortune of a rich relative. However, this relative distances himself from Judith's family after an argument with Judith's mother and dies shortly afterwards. Because her family is cut off

with a shilling, Judith begins to train as a nurse to support herself and her younger sisters. Bernard Aglionby, Judith's cousin who has inherited in her stead, leaves his working-class surroundings to succeed to the country seat of his grandfather, where he meets and falls in love with Judith. Bernard is a dominant and overbearing character, but Judith is strongly attracted to him, and only refuses him because her mother played a part in disinheriting him in the first place. However, when he finally discovers that Judith's peculiar sense of honour is the reason for her refusal, he is rather amused than otherwise, and after confronting her with his knowledge he proposes again. Judith gladly stops working as a nurse and marries him.

***Diana Tempest,* Mary Cholmondeley**

Many years before the events of the novel, the protagonist's mother Diana Courtenay broke her engagement to Mr Tempest when she eloped with his brother, Colonel Tempest. Mrs Colonel Tempest died after a few years of unhappy marriage, and her daughter Diana "Di" Tempest was forthwith raised by her grandmother, whose shock and heartbreak over the loss of her daughter has caused her to raise the younger Diana as a New Woman. Di meets and falls in love with John Tempest, her cousin and heir of the Tempest estate. John, Mr Tempest's son by his "second" wife – the one he married after Diana had eloped – is actually illegitimate. Mr Tempest had been aware of this since John's birth, but chose to ignore it because his brother Colonel Tempest would have succeeded to the estate in default of John. Since the Colonel had eloped with Mr Tempest's fiancée, the latter holds an even greater grudge against his brother than against his illegitimate heir, and therefore denies that John is not his son.

During the course of the novel, it is revealed that when Colonel Tempest had first been cut out while John was still a child, he had instigated a conspiracy to murder in order to eliminate John from the lineage. Throughout the novel, John survives

multiple assaults on his life without suspecting a conspiracy, while the Colonel tries frantically to remove the price on John's head which he now regrets. A change in the situation occurs when John, who had successfully wooed his cousin Diana in the meantime, discovers his illegitimacy. He renounces his claims to the inheritance and discontinues courting Diana, who is heartbroken. For a short time, the property and title fall to Colonel Tempest, who is seriously ill at the time. Simultaneously with this news, however, the Colonel learns that his beloved son Archibald has been mistaken for John and killed by the conspirators. Since Colonel Tempest dies of shock when he receives the news, Di is suddenly next in line for the Tempest estate, and the novel ends with her reunion with John, whom she plans on reinstating as the head of the family through marrying him.

***A Yellow Aster*, Iota**

In *A Yellow Aster*, the protagonist Gwen Waring's parents Grace and Henry are both scientists who apply their professional method of cold observation and research to every matter in life, including their children. In consequence, Gwen grows up "without a heart" – she is unable to love and desires autonomy and conquest instead. After her coming out, Gwen quickly decides to marry Lord Humphrey Strange, a hardened traveller, as an experiment, but she soon comes to regret her curiosity as she feels she has made herself Humphrey's chattel without being in love with him. Humphrey suffers under Gwen's heartlessness but has high hopes for her "dormant womanhood." However, Gwen continues to be distant and unloving until pregnancy causes the relations between the couple to break down, and Humphrey leaves, admonishing Gwen to be a good mother, if she cannot be a good wife. Gwen then returns home to watch over her own mother's death bed. Gwen's mother Grace has had a turn of heart since her daughter's marriage, and has spent the last months of her life bitterly regretting the

fact that she did not have a loving relationship with her children. The two reconcile just before Grace dies, and Gwen delivers a boy, to whom she is cold and distant until he falls sick shortly after. Watching over the sick baby and the memory of her mother's late change of heart in combination suddenly make Gwen love her child, and Humphrey by proxy. The child recovers, and Humphrey is brought back from his travels with a fever. When he awakes, he finds that Gwen has turned into the perfect mother-woman he had always anticipated she would become.

***Dear Faustina*, Rhoda Broughton**

At the beginning of the novel, Althea Vane's mother decides to leave her (mostly grown up) children behind to devote her life to philanthropic causes. Althea's siblings are shocked, but Althea herself has been won for the woman's cause by her friend Faustina Bateson. Faustina, who is romantically attached to Althea, is described throughout as an odious person, but it takes Althea some time to realise her true character. The two move in together, but after a short harmonious period it becomes obvious that Althea is unsuited for the type of work that Faustina had expected her to undertake. She begins to treat Althea with condescension, and both become frustrated and search other emotional connections. Althea falls in love with John Trecothik Drake, a gentleman who has renounced his family and fortune to establish a Socialist settlement, and Faustina befriends Cressida, the fiancée of Althea's older brother. When Faustina attempts to convince Cressida to take up rescue work, the terrified Althea breaks with her and flees to her sister. At this point, John Drake resolves the complication by forcing Faustina to give up Cressida. He subsequently finds Althea a position within the framework of his own philanthropic settlement for which she is suited, and it is implied that the two will eventually become a couple.

Chapter IV: The Polluted Man and the Limits of Impairment

Miss Brown, Vernon Lee

Walter Hamlin, an aesthete poet and painter, falls in love with the servant Anne Brown on a journey to Italy. He offers to have her educated and to settle a yearly income on her with a view to developing her "soul". At the stipulation of Anne's cousin Dick Brown, Walter binds himself to marrying Anne at any point she chooses, whereas Anne herself is legally free to marry whom she pleases. Anne accepts because she has fallen in love with Walter. After Anne's education is finished, she settles in London and is introduced to Walter's circle of friends. Her initial infatuation with Walter quickly gives way to disappointment and repulsion as she realises that he is vain, weak and debauched, and she attempts to convince herself that she is not morally obliged to marry him. However, when Walter falls under the influence of his depraved cousin Madame Sacha Elaguine and disintegrates before Anne's eyes, she resolves to save him by marrying him. She turns down a marriage proposal from her cousin Dick and summons Walter back from his elopement with Madame Elaguine by pretending that she loves him. It is implied that she will continue to protect him from his inborn tendency to drink by her strength and moral purity, but also that she will be unhappy for the rest of her live.

The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten, Annie E. Holdsworth

At the time of their wedding, Priscilla and Dunstane Momerie are both young and promising authors in their own way: Priscilla has already published one book and Dunstane is planning on writing a book on the subject of religion. They move to London together and settle down in a poor quarter of town; both plan on writing. While Priscilla, a parson's daughter, adapts quickly to being a member of the working class, Dunstane, a grocer's son, is appalled by their surroundings and withdraws into dreams

of greatness. Priscilla quickly realises that Dunstane is a dreamer who delays writing his "New Religion" indefinitely, at the same time, he belittles her work. When Priscilla becomes pregnant, Dunstane's dislike towards the unborn child further estranges the couple. He then has a sudden attack of hysteric paralysis, which the doctor mistakes for hereditary paralysis. Although Priscilla realises eventually that Dunstane could walk if he wanted to, she gives up her dreams of writing for fame, and begins to churn out articles and romance novels to support herself and Dunstane. When their daughter Dolly is born, relations between the couple relax for a while because he likes the child and is content in his role as a patient nurse while Priscilla works. However, Dolly is sickly and weak, and when she chokes while Dunstane is watching her he chooses not to help the baby because that would betray his paralysis as a fraud. Dolly suffocates, and Priscilla is utterly distraught. In consequence, she briefly considers eloping with Stephen Malden, a painter who has fallen in love with her. However, Priscilla ultimately realises that Stephen could not give her back the years she has lost. She decides against eloping and rouses herself once more to care for London's poorest, and to complete a novel she had been trying to write for many years, and which was initially titled *The Book of the Great City*. At the last minute, she changes the book's title to *The Years that the Locust Hath Eaten*, thus creating an odd doubling of and connection between the book she has written, and the book that was written about her. As Priscilla's novel is an account of the toil and the pains of the London poor, among whom she numbers, the connection is more than suggestive. Priscilla dies from exhaustion before she learns that her book has been accepted into print, but is "rewarded" by a queenly funeral procession of the people whose lives she had brightened. At her deathbed, Dunstane finally realises that he has killed his child and wife for the sake of his personal comfort, and promises to better himself.

***Poor Max*, Iota**

In *Poor Max*, the affectionate and upright Judith Becher marries the promising young author Max Morland against the express counsel of his aunt Lady Grindal, who is convinced that Max's neurotic disposition will make life unbearable for him and his wife unless he marries money. Judith and her relatives, who are poor, ignore this warning. After an initial period of bliss largely facilitated by Lady Grindal's generous donations, the strain of supporting Judith and their two children in a small London flat begins to expose Max as a neurotic, who is gifted in so many different ways that he can bring nothing to fruition. Relations between the couple become more complicated when Judith catches him lying, a feat that unveils his "real" nature to her. Since her mother had died of a broken heart occasioned by her husband's lies, this is an unforgivable sin in Judith's eyes, but instead of abandoning Max, she withdraws to her native country Ireland for some weeks, and emerges again with a clear sense of her responsibility towards her weak husband. In the meantime, Max's friend Captain Sandy Muir has fallen in love with Judith. However, Judith refuses all offers of help and continues to support Max in her own way: by secretly writing third rate novels, and by flirting with Max's biggest creditor Churton Graves until she has the money to pay him, at which point she takes complete control over the household and financial affairs. She also influences Captain Muir to accept a position in India, and Churton Graves to go on an extended journey. Several years elapse; Max remains brilliantly ineffective, and Judith quietly raises her two sons and protects her husband from committing any follies. One day Max suddenly realises that the world considers him a failure. Shocked by this realisation, he makes an attempt at restoring the traditional gender roles between him and Judith by insisting on nursing a mutual friend through diphtheria. He succeeds in saving his life, but catches the illness himself and dies shortly after. A year later, Captain Muir returns to declare his love, and Judith and Sandy plan to marry until a

financial disaster destroys Sandy's savings. Since Judith realises that her oldest son Daniel is an exact replica of his father's neurotic weakness and will therefore always be a failure unless provided with an ample income, Judith refuses to marry Sandy, and calls back Churton Graves from his journeys. The two are married, and Graves settles 10,000 pounds on Judith's children, which will save Daniel from his father's fate.

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